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Vol. V, No. 2

Spring, 1954

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Russell Kirk

THE ETHICS OF CENSORSHIP

The Supreme Court of the United States, this January, handed down a decision that motion-pictures are to be considered as part of the freedom of speech guaranteed by the Federal Constitution, and that state and local authorities may not exercise a censorship of films. The state of Ohio was forbidden to interfere with the old film of sexual degeneracy and crime, "M," and the state of New York was prevented from suppressing "La Ronde," a picture of adultery *en masse*. Until 1952, the Supreme Court did not attempt to extend its jurisdiction over the question of state and local censorships; but in that year, the Court upheld the distributors of "The Miracle" against the state of New York, on the ground that this attempt at censorship was an invasion of free speech.

Now there is a curious tone of what President Gordon Chalmers of Kenyon College calls "disintegrated liberalism," in the Court's recent decisions. Carrying the concept of absolute freedom of expression even further than John Stuart Mill and the doctrinaire liberals of the last century would have ventured to urge it, the Justices appear to imply that no sort of check upon public utterances or exhibitions or the press is lawful under the Constitution—not on grounds of morality, or of taste, or of public order. Yet hardly any member of the Constitutional Convention would have maintained this radical concept of freedom of speech; indeed, they would have condemned it as anarchic. In plain fact, no society ever has tolerated absolute license of expression; and no society can. Such toleration requires a fatuous conviction of the complete goodness of human nature, and of the sweet reasonableness of the mass of humanity, that is soon exploded by a little

experience of the consequences. What Burke called "a licentious toleration" presently provokes a reaction; and it may be an oppressive reaction. If state and local authorities are forbidden to exercise any censorship of films, then it is probable that presently Congress will establish a censorship more thorough and inescapable than any that states and localities ever thought of exercising. I am afraid that the justices of the Supreme Court, like most of us, are thoroughly confused as to the nature of free expression and the nature of censorship. What we require in this perplexed field—as in the similarly vexed question of "academic freedom"—is the accurate definition of terms.

Freedom of opinion and taste have been longest secure in the English and American political establishments, censorship having been only a partial and exceptional influence in the English-speaking countries since the seventeenth century. During 1953, however, an animated discussion of possible extension or revival of censorship in the United States occurred not only in America, but extended to the British and European press and political platform. In a number of instances, alarm at censorial tendencies appears to have been exaggerated; but it seems that the question of censorship, in politics and in matters affecting private morality, probably will loom large for a long time to come in the English-speaking world. The causes of this apprehension are chiefly three: the increased danger from seditious writings, in the present age of lightning war and international conspiracy; the conspicuous increase in the volume of indecent or salaciously suggestive publications; and the problems connected with comparatively new instruments for forming mass-opinion—television, radio, and motion-pictures. These three factors received considerable public consideration in 1953. A fourth aspect of censorship, however, perhaps as important as any of those above, was little discussed: *private* censorship, or the suppression of opinion by a conscious or unconscious conspiracy of silence among persons substantially in control of publishing and publicizing.

In England, fears were expressed that a species of censorship neither wholly governmental nor wholly private may arise during the next few years. A long debate in Parliament and the press over

a proposal to permit advertising on British Broadcasting system television-programs centered about the problem of free expression in a quasi-governmental monopoly of radio-communication; no change in the general policies of the BBC has resulted, however. Some writers expressed concern for the continued independence of the British newspaper press. Though the consolidation of the control of newspapers into the hands of a few proprietors, and the influence of large advertisers, have long been criticized as tending to diminish true independence of spirit in newspapers, in 1953 it was clear that a fresh cause for alarm was discernible, at least in England: control by governmental officials through the medium of large state expenditures on advertising. As the British welfare state assumes functions previously exercised by private corporations or persons, almost inevitably the government becomes a principal buyer of advertising, successor to the private entrepreneur. Thus the government is given, without need for asking, a great power of patronage over the press. Mr. Brian Inglis, in an article entitled "Government and the Press," in the July number of *The Cambridge Journal*, suggested how the public-relations officers of governmental boards and bureaus are becoming virtual masters of journalists, in consequence: "The concentration of power in the hands of government represents a potential threat to the press, whose freedom, in the commonly accepted sense of the word, must always rest upon a dispersal of the influences that can be brought to bear upon it." This is not precisely state censorship of the old sort; it is subtler and less predictable, more nearly resembling the hidden censorship sometimes exercised by influential private persons.

In the United States, the possibility of such censorial influence being exercised upon newspapers through the medium of governmental advertising was as yet vague. But through the concentration in New York City of the publishing industry, the book-reviewing journals, the great national newspapers, and the headquarters of radio networks—a process of consolidation at work for many years, and still meeting with little check—a curious kind of censorship of ideas and imagination was possible, and often took effect. This private censorship was not ordinarily deliberate

or conspiratorial: rather, it was a kind of contagion of opinion within a comparatively small set of people, living a highly artificial life in a city with few roots in the past—persons sometimes with small faith in traditional values, and therefore the more anxious for the approval of other people in their coterie of publicists, writers, or entertainers. Many of them were what Mr. David Riesman, in *The Lonely Crowd*, calls "other-directed persons"—that is, men and women who depend upon the approbation of their neighbors and their little group for a sanction to their own actions. In such a set, certain words or concepts take on what Mr. Richard Weaver, in *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, calls "charismatic terms" or "god terms": words almost divorced from their original meanings, and become abstract symbols calling forth approving or disapproving responses almost automatic, regardless of particular circumstances. Many people in the set of publishers, reviewers, radio-employees, writers, and others engaged in satisfying the public's taste for awareness, had for their god-terms or charismatic terms such words as "liberal," "progressive," "pragmatic," "ambivalent," and the like, and corresponding terms of an unpleasant charismatic nature, or even devil-terms, like "traditional," "theistic," "value-judgment," and "authoritarian." Being pathetically anxious to have the approval of their immediate associates (who often themselves were governed by the same desire and the same word-tags), many of these persons ignored or sneered at any work of literature, political opinion, or artistic endeavor which did not conform to their fashionable conventions. Thus they tended to exercise a censorship, sometimes vociferous, sometimes silent, over a variety of books and other publications—a tyranny of the other-directed mind over the old-fashioned mind, and often over the truly independent mind. Tocqueville, in *Democracy in America*, described this danger and foretold the growth of its power: "In America the majority raises formidable barriers round the liberty of opinion; within these barriers an author may write what he pleases, but woe to him if he goes beyond them. Not that he is in danger of an auto-da-fé, but he is exposed to continued obloquy and persecution." The opinions of the people who tend to control publishing and publicizing are not necessarily

those of the majority of Americans; often, indeed, they are at sharp variance; but the majority which these people court is the majority within their own circle; and American opinion, from the peculiar concentration of publishing and publicizing in one or two cities, often is censored according to whatever may be the fad of the month or the year within the charmed circle of cognoscenti.

Mr. Henry Regnery, a vigorous Chicago publisher, delivered an address on this topic to the Friends of American Authors, in Chicago, on February 25, 1953. He pointed out that there had been an unmistakable tendency, among reviewers, to ignore or deride books of a conservative inclination, and to praise whatever books compiled with the approved canons of "liberalism" and "progress." The treatment of Mr. Whittaker Chambers' remarkable book *Witness* was an instance of this. Mr. Regnery concluded:

I think that the situation I have described is dangerous for a number of reasons. It not only leads to the suppression of the truth, as I think it has in many cases, but it can also, by misinforming the public, and by creating various kinds of pressures, lead to such disasters as the present situation in Asia . . . I have had some rather strong things to say about some of the book reviewers and book-reviewing publications. I don't want to give the impression that I feel the *New York Times*, the *Herald-Tribune*, the *Saturday Review*, or any of the others, don't have a perfect right to let such people as Owen Lattimore, Joseph Barnes, Mark Gayn, Edgar Snow, or anyone else, review books for them . . . While those in a position to influence public opinion and to control the means of communication have the right to suppress certain ideas and to further others, they also have the obligation to serve truth . . . What we must remember, it seems to me, is that in the world we live in, we can't afford to delude ourselves, to make stupid, uncritical decisions unrelated to reality . . . Stupidity is one of the things that history doesn't forgive.

There was abundant evidence during 1953 that this species of censorship, or suppression of full discussion of important topics, continued to occur—sometimes the very people who protested against "censorship" exercising, at the same time, a private censorship of their own against points of view they happened to oppose. But there were also indications that many publishers, re-

viewers, and critics were beginning to see the insufficiency of their former prejudices (see Conservatism). Simply a change to another set of prejudices, however, does not solve the problem of private censorship, but only changes its current application. A true liberality of mind among persons entrusted with the circulation of opinion—a readiness to think it possible that they themselves might sometimes be mistaken—was much needed. Yet the difficulties in the way of attaining such a reform of principle in publishing and literary occupations remain formidable.

* * *

Though little was said, during the past year, about the problem of private censorship, much was said about the menace of governmental censorship in America. An immediate cause for this discussion was the activity of Senator Joseph McCarthy. The episode most bitterly debated was a visit of two investigators sent by Senator McCarthy to the American libraries maintained in European cities by the American state department as propaganda-centers for informing Europeans about American life and ideas. In their report, released in June, the investigators declared that many books in the libraries were Communistic in tone, or else cast discredit upon American society; while certain conservative writings, pro-American books, and books in defense of private enterprise were conspicuous by their absence. The State Department, taking action, ordered the burning of a small number of books said to be subversive. Protests against such censorship appeared in many quarters, particularly in the liberal press, and in a declaration entitled "The Freedom to Read," issued by the American Library Association on June 25, having been adopted at the Association's convention in Los Angeles. An interesting colloquy took place, at the height of this dispute, between Dr. James Conant, High Commissioner to Germany, and Senator McCarthy. The American government, Senator McCarthy said, should not have permitted works of Communist propaganda to be disseminated through its libraries abroad. Dr. Conant agreed that books by members of the Communist party should not have been on the shelves of these libraries, and were justly removed,

but said to Senator McCarthy, "I regret the fact that you felt it was necessary to do it publicly." Mr. Conant went on to explain that he would have had the books suppressed by executive order, without public controversy. Now this was a strangely illogical proposal. First, it is doubtful that the books would have been removed at all, if the matter had not been called to public attention; and second, a secret or private censorship, with no rules of procedure generally known, is more of a threat to freedom of opinion than a regularly-organized official censorship with fixed principles.

The opposition of the American Library Association to the censorship proposed by Senator McCarthy and partially put into effect by the State Department was at once more vehement and more logical than Dr. Conant's objections. Going beyond the question of overseas libraries, the Association's manifesto began thus:

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove books from sale, to censor textbooks, to label "controversial" books, to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries.

All this was true. But it had been true of American society for a great while, and the tendency toward censorship of this description probably was less strong, generally speaking, in 1953 than it had been ten years earlier. The difference was that the pressure for censorship came from a new quarter. Formerly, the pressure had been chiefly from people on the "left"; now it was chiefly from people on the "right." The Library Association had made no protest earlier, when the principle of the freedom to read and certain issues immensely important to the future of America were as much at stake as they were in 1953. It was difficult not to believe that the authors of this manifesto either were more alarmed at the new sort of censorship than they were at censorship as a general principle, or had not understood how strong censorial pressures had been before and during the Second World War. That American intolerance of dissenting opinions, which Tocqueville described as a tendency of democracy that always must be guarded

against with resolution, was a proper subject for the American Library Association to consider. Such silliness as endeavors—often successful—to exclude *Little Black Sambo* from public libraries, on the pretence that it was “racist,” required all the vigilance and toleration that librarians could summon up.

But the Librarians’ approach to the problem, in this manifesto, was either naive and old-fashioned, or else disingenuous. The following paragraphs from the manifesto suggest its general character:

We are deeply concerned about these attempts at suppression. Most such attempts rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary citizen, by exercising his critical judgment, will accept the good and reject the bad. The censors, public and private, assume that they should determine what is good and what is bad for their fellow citizens.

We trust Americans to recognize propaganda, and to reject obscenity. We do not believe they need the help of censors to assist them in this task. We do not believe they are prepared to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be “protected” against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

Now these two paragraphs were a collection of fallacies. In part, they were the fallacies of Bentham and Mill, more than a century ago exposed by Macaulay and Coleridge and others. The notion that the “ordinary citizen,” without any assistance, knows at once what is good or bad for him is a concept more unreal than “economic man.” It has been exploded by the terrible events of this century, so that old-fashioned liberal democracy now is at bay, restricted to a few countries. The exaltation of private judgment has been abandoned, in its pure and rigid form, by nearly every serious thinker. As Mr. David Thomson points out in his little book, *Equality*, modern democracy does not and cannot rest upon this illusory postulate, but endures upon grounds much more practical.

That the “ordinary citizen” does *not* automatically distinguish false propaganda for what it is, ought to be evident to anyone

who knows the course of events in modern Germany or Italy—or, for that matter, the United States. And as for rejecting obscenity—why, masses of pornography are sold openly on drugstore racks, and worse would be distributed, if it were not for the post office censorship and local police-regulations. The Association's manifesto suggests that the authors of this document have sat shut up among their books as closely as did their intellectual ancestor Bentham.

And the manifesto implies that no sort of censorship already exists in libraries—that every library keeps available every book and periodical published. In actuality, every librarian must make himself a censor of sorts. Twelve thousand new titles are published annually, in the United States alone—and still more in Britain. Only two or three libraries obtain them all; most libraries buy only a small proportion of them; the overseas libraries maintained by the American government bought only one thousand of these twelve thousand titles. If the librarian selects, he must be a censor: not a political censor, necessarily (though it is difficult to escape even this sort of censorship), but a censor upon worth, taste, and the general tenor of American thought. Librarians may be the best persons in America to act as censors, or they may not—the recent tendency to over-emphasize librarians' technical training at the expense of liberal learning has reduced their merit as arbiters of taste. But they do act as censors, and they are blind to their own performance if they maintain that no one has a right to determine what books Americans shall read: for they have been doing just that for many years. There is evidence which suggests that many of them exercised their powers, for some years, along lines vaguely "liberal," like New York publishers and reviewers. That prejudice is changing among them, as it is changing elsewhere. Yet we ought not to ignore the general problem of censorship simply because the tendency of the hour is in a different direction. "Who are these persons," inquired the *New York Times*, in commending the manifesto of the Library Association, "who assume to tell us what an adult citizen residing in this country is permitted to read?" That answer is not difficult to obtain: most conspicuously, those persons are the librarians. And

it does no good for them to close their eyes to their own responsibilities.

The Associations' manifesto, then, however well-intentioned, was superficial in its approach to the censorship question, which grows monthly more serious. Simple denunciations of all censorship are futile. Even in criticizing the removal of books from overseas libraries, the Association did no more than confuse the issue. For overseas libraries did not, and could not, keep on their shelves *all* books about America. It was not a simple matter of a Frenchman or an Italian wandering into such a library and taking down any volume at random, which the Librarians seem to mistake for a democratic process: the books in those overseas libraries had been selected by authority. Indeed, Congress and the State Department from the beginning had intended the overseas libraries to be instruments for propaganda, not simply repositories of learned works. A State Department directive stated that the purpose of these libraries was "to reflect American objectives, values, the nature of American institutions and life, and to utilize the book and related materials to advance ideas of America in the struggle against Communism." This may have been a wise purpose, or it may not; but it was naivete or disingenuousness for the Library Association's policy-makers to write as though a blow had been struck against the absolute freedom to read by removing from the shelves books which did not suit the purpose for which these propaganda-libraries had been established. The purpose of such a collection is by no means the same as the purpose of the Library of Congress. Neither Senator McCarthy nor anyone else proposed a general surveillance over real American libraries at home. The Association did well to speak out against the danger of over-zealous or intolerant private associations bullying libraries—though it should be remembered that people who pay for libraries are entitled to some voice in their policies. But the Association's defense was scarcely better than a mere indiscriminating declaration that all books are equally true and valuable. If the freedom to read is to be preserved in America, it will require more careful thought than this. The man who takes a foolhardy stand in favor of all books equally, wise or lunatic, holy or obscene,

soon may find himself saddled with a censorship more rigorous than anything he imagined in his nightmares.

* * *

Throughout the literate world, during the past decade universal education seemed to be running contrary to all the high expectations of its nineteenth-century advocates, by enabling men to read not the sober and scientific works that Victorian educators had intended to press upon everyone, but rather the lowest and most salacious products of the imagination; romances of lust and cruelty sold by the millions, the most notorious among their authors being Mr. Mickey Spillane. Among the still greater number of people upon whom visual images produce a stronger effect than does the printed page, an enormous outpouring of illustrated magazines and books was distributed, employing the technical achievements of modern engraving to gratify prurience: women naked or nearly naked were the chief selling-point of this mass-industry. Although a voluntary code of taste to some extent still restricted the major American motion-picture producers from great excesses of this description, and a rather similar co-operative censorship prevailed in England, French and Italian motion-pictures continued to be often lewd or violent, under the pretext of "social realism." The television industry, rather timid as a newcomer, for the most part kept within the rules of decency, though scarcely of good taste, during 1953—in part, perhaps, because of threats of censorship during the preceding year, when the program-producers had displayed some tendency to indulge their facilities for prurience.

France, as in earlier years, continued to be a chief producer of indecent publications. In Italy, a state censorship, assisted by municipal authorities, kept pornography within limits, particularly in its photographic form; and to this censorship (adopted several years ago through the influence of the largest single Parliamentary group, the Christian Democrats) was joined a censorship against libels and indecent caricatures of an anti-clerical cast, a form of obscenity popular in Italy for nearly a century. In Britain, the authorities curbed the distribution of salacious

writing with some success, although lurid cover-illustrations upon paper-bound books almost equalled the American phenomena of this sort and photographs of nude women were common enough in popular magazines—an indulgence not accorded in America by the postoffice censors. Two or three quasi-pornographic little magazines "for men," imported from Australia, enjoyed a large news-kiosk sale in British towns.

In the United States, the wave of leering "historical romances" and stories of crime and concupiscence swept on unchecked; it had been in motion for nearly fifteen years, but had reached gigantic proportions since the end of the Second World War. The paper-bound books on the racks of drugstores and novelty-shops continued to swell in volume; and a great proportion of them were sold by suggestive or actually pornographic cover-illustrations. Several octavo-sized magazines "for men," consisted chiefly of pictures of models and entertainers in a state of undress, were launched during the year by that curious pornographic-publishing industry centered in New York, which alters the format and substance of its publications from year to year, a highly competitive business sensitive to slight alterations in the taste of its millions of customers. Other magazines of "adventure" or "science-fiction" were scarcely on a higher level; while the taste of children was debased by the continued production of "comic" booklets specializing in horror, torture, monstrosity, and exhibitionism.

As a sample of the tastes to which even well-known publishers pandered during the year, one may take an office memorandum of the A. A. Wyn Company to its salesmen, describing a novel about to be released, a translation of a French romance called *Marie of the Isles*. (In France, incidentally, the post-war imitation of American literary fads had spread to the dagger-and-bosom novel, sold in hundreds of thousands.) A list of the chief incidents in the book ran as follows:

Bedroom scene in Dieppe; Parisian gaming house; a duel; a riot in the back streets of Paris; cell scene in the Bastille; a man being broken on the wheel; a boudoir scene in Paris; an audience with Richelieu; sea battle and boarding by pirates; seduction scene; revolt on a slave ship; medical examination for the virginity of Madame de Saint-Andre; thirteen

pages of love (starting where the three dots usually terminate such a scene in other books); night ambush on Martinique; storming of the fortress at Basse Terre; one hammock encounter and two roadside amorous encounters; a rebellion nipped in the bud by a massacre; naked dancing girl being whipped on the decks of a ship; a bargain Marie seals on the couch of a most despicable pirate; voodoo ceremony and orgy of the Negroes; homecoming love scene; triple boudoir scene; attack by Caribs; earthquake, eruption of Mount Pelee; revolt of slaves, sacking a distillery, rape; a big happy ending.

Now clearly something was wrong with the mind and conscience of a society in which lubricity and prurience commanded such a market. The problem extended beyond the competence of any regular censorship; its roots were in the character of twentieth-century life, and cannot be described in detail here. The lust after violent artifice, these base longings for what real life does not afford, are the marks of a profound social boredom or fatigue, the consequence of the decay of church, family, old educational disciplines, and work with purpose. Censorship, however, still might aspire to check the most degrading manifestations of this tendency. A good deal of discussion took place in Congress and in state legislatures on the subject during 1951-1953, although little positive legislation was enacted. The postoffice censorship appeared to be somewhat less strict than formerly—perhaps intimidated by cries of “Comstockery” a few years earlier. Municipal authorities generally were lax in applying their vague powers to preserve public decency, so that the drugstore news-racks were left unmolested in most towns, though the police might suppress the most vile forms of pornography (often in the form of crude comic-books, surreptitiously sold) or might fine some book-dealer for having sold something by Frank Harris or Henry Miller.

It appears that, in many towns, pornographic or suggestive publications were almost forced upon magazine-shops and news-stands by the wholesale distributors, who often tried to insist upon dealers accepting a standardized assortment of periodicals, regardless of the taste of the shopkeeper or his community. In a few instances, co-operative resistance to such pressure, backed by

clergymen or municipal authorities, terminated this aspect of mass-merchandizing.

One of the most sensible discussions of pornography and the censorial function, in the course of 1953, was Dr. Margaret Mead's "Sex and Censorship," published in *New World Writing*, third selection—a volume, incidentally, containing some repellent examples of indecency among the *avant garde* of "young writers." Miss Mead's sympathy with the aims and methods of the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* suggests that modern thinkers of some insight are turning their backs upon the abstractions of nineteenth-century rationalists and liberals, who thought that bad books and bad art simply would wither away with the extension of schooling and the regular exercise of private judgment. The first endeavor of those of us who would contend vigorously against the dissemination of pornography, Dr. Mead suggested, ought to be the apprehension of a clear definition of what pornography is and is not:

The Index performs a very important function: it makes Catholic readers aware of the kind of books they are reading. They may read them, but as they read, a persistent sense of alertness to sin protects them from a loss of values. . . .

The same course of reasoning can be followed in the case of pornography. But legislative decrees on the subject of decency are only half the answer. These will, it is true, insure that the whispered word, the leer of the vendor or of the schoolmate serves, like the Index, to put the new consumer on guard: 'This is pornographic, forbidden.' But this is not enough. It is likewise important that the guns of those who care about religion, those who care about literature and art, . . . should be trained against labeling anything pornographic when it is *not* pornographic.

Actually, it is as important at present to legislate against false labeling as against the content of a particular book. Every time a publisher puts a cover on a twenty-five-cent edition of a serious and important book promising illicit delights to the prurient, the issue between pornography on the one hand and literature, art, science, and ethics on the other is obscured. . . . Today we face the danger of indifference in literature dealing with sex. The serious and the cheap are not adequately differentiated. . . . If every publisher who issued a serious work in a pornographic wrapper was

subject to indictment similar—although paradoxically in reverse—to prosecution under the Pure Food and Drug Act, we might begin to steer our way through this maze in which we find ourselves as we obliterate, hastily, without due consideration, the distinctions between the masses and the classes, adults and children, the pure and the impure. To the old abused adage, 'To the pure all things are pure,' should be added, 'To the inexperienced, great confusion is possible.'

These sentences reflecting an enlightened cognizance of our present dangers, are worth a dozen manifestoes of the American Library Association. Our time will not be much helped by invoking the dogmas of Bentham and Mill, which were peculiarly the product of the age in which they were pronounced. In dealing with the problem of censorship, we can indeed learn much from the past; but there is more to the past than the age of Utilitarianism. Like so many other difficulties in this time, the need for censorship and the limitation of censorship are best studied in the light of ethical principle and of the wisdom of our ancestors; but, as with many other grave concerns, we think ourselves in too much of a hurry for that.

Archibald MacLeish

The Infinite Reason

Rilke thought it was the human part
To translate planet into angel —
Bacteria of mortal heart

Fermenting, into something rich and strange,
The orchard at home, the sky above Toledo:
Sight into soul was what we lived to change.

The key, he told us, was the angel's need,
Not our necessity — and yet
No angel answered for *his* heart to feed.

The truth is nearer to the true than that.
The truth is, the necessity is ours.
Man is creature to whom meaning matters.

Until we read these face, figures, flowers,
These shapes averted from us that all vanish,
Everything vanishes — a swarm of hours

Swirling about a bonfire that began
When? Why? To end where? And for what?

Miser of meanings in the stars, O man

Who finds the poem moonlight has forgotten!
Eternity is what our wanderers gather,
Image by image, out of time — the cut

Branch that flowers in the bowl. Our Father,
Thou who ever shalt be, the poor body
Dying at every ditch hath borne Thee, Father.

Our human part is to redeem the god
Drowned in this time of space, this space
That time encloses.

From the Tyrrhenian flood

The floated marble, the cold human face!

John L. Sweeney

THE GARDENER AND THE PRINCE

'Adam I love, my madmen's love is endless,
No tell-tale lover has an end more certain,
All legends' sweethearts on a tree of stories,
My cross of tales behind a fabulous curtain.'

December's thorn screwed in a brow of holly.

Green as beginning, let the garden diving
Soar, with its two bark towers, to that Day
When the worm builds with the gold straws of venom
My nest of mercies in the rude, red tree.

No poet in our time, except perhaps Joyce, has acknowledged the fatherhood of Adam as filially and compassionately as Dylan Thomas has done. His sonship and Adamhood he expresses in the traditional terms of the Fall and the *felix culpa* which brought forth the second and redemptive Love and his happiest expression comes through the association of Adam with a child in Wales. The metaphor of the child is father to Thomas' master metaphor—'man.' His poem "Fern Hill" and his story "The Tree" are companions behind "a fabulous curtain."

I prayed to the tree, said the child.
Always pray to a tree, said the gardener, thinking
of Calvary and Eden.¹

Adam is the gardener (In the beginning, he would say, there was a tree.) and the force of this characterization is intensified if we

¹Dylan Thomas, "The Tree" in *The Map of Love*, p. 56.

recall that another gardener talked with Mary Magdalene near the sepulchre after the Resurrection

In the beginning was the pale signature,
Three-syllabled and starry as the smile;
And after came the imprints on the water,
Stamp of the minted face upon the moon;
The blood that touched the crosstree and the grail
Touched the first cloud and left a sign.²

Always pray to a tree, said the gardener, thinking of Calvary and Eden. Perhaps Thomas, thinking of the progress of the soul ("from darkness to some measure of light"³) had been drawn to Donne's lines.

That Crosse, our joy and grieffe, where nails did tye
That All, which alwayes was all, every where;
Which could not sinne, and yet all sinnes did beare;
Which could not die, yet could not chuse but die;
Stood in the self same roome in Calvarie,
Where first grew the forbidden learned tree.⁴

The stories and especially the fantasies are rich and violent expansions of Thomas' strongest poetic themes. "The Tree" is one of the most explicit of these expansions and one of the least violent.

The gardener loved the Bible. When the sun sank and the garden was full of people, he would sit with a candle in his shed, reading of the first love and the legend of apples and serpents. But the death of Christ on a tree he loved most.⁵

In "Fern Hill" remembered childhood was "all Shining, it was Adam and maiden," and the child, before an awareness of man's

²Dylan Thomas, "In the Beginning" in *Collected Poems*, p. 27.

³Dylan Thomas from *New Verse*, October 1934.

⁴John Donne, "The Progresse of the Soule."

⁵Dylan Thomas, "The Tree" in *The Map of Love*.

mortality had descended on him, was prince, as was Adam, once below a time, in Eden."⁶

And honoured among wagons I was prince of the
apple towns
And once below a time I lordly had the trees
and leaves
Trail with daisies and barley
Down the rivers of the windfall light.⁷

The 'prince' of childhood and infant Adamhood may have been suggested to Thomas' eye and ear by an image from Donne's "The Progresse of the Soule." Donne went deep into Thomas' creative consciousness, sensuously and religiously though not philosophically. The vision and the image and the music in the image meant everything to him. They were the wisdom he loved if we wish to think of him as a philosopher. Thomas was a seer (feeler and hearer too) in the way that the druids, we're told, were seers; and there is a theory that they were poets as well. In Donne's poem the soul-enlived apple is prince.

Prince of the orchard, faire as dawning morne
Fenc'd with the law, and ripe as soone as borne
That apple grew, which this Soule did enlive,⁸

In "Fern Hill" Thomas is remembering his own childhood and re-creating the childhood of man before the Fall which made man mortal. In "The Tree" he is observing Adam and the child after the Atonement. Adam is ancient and at one with God; his white beard was "the beard of an apostle."

In "Fern Hill" the only sombre note, but a reverberating one, is the sense of loss which heightens and darkens the exuberant recollection of bliss. In "The Tree" the persistent tone is a haunting, premonitory sombreness which is unrelieved until Christmas Day when the child moves toward the innocent victim to re-enact the

⁶Dylan Thomas, "Fern Hill" in *Collected Poems*, p. 179.

⁷Ibid.

⁸John Donne, "The Progresse of the Soule."

redemptive sacrifice which the gardner "loved most." The victim had already re-enacted the agony of Gethsemane.

Then a fear of the garden overcame him,
the shrubs were his enemies, and the
trees that make an avenue down to the
gate lifted their arms in horror.

The place was too high, peering down
to the tall hills; the place was too low,
shivering at the plumed shoulders of a
new mountain. Here the wind was too
wild, fuming about the silence, raising
a Jewish voice out of the elder boughs;
here the silence beat like a human heart.
And as he sat under the cruel hills, he
heard a voice that was in him cry out:
Why did you bring me here?⁹

During the days before Christmas the child was troubled by fears.
He is reassured by the friendship of the tree.

Closing his eyes, he stared into a
spinning cavern deeper than the darkness
of the garden where the first tree on
which the unreal birds had fastened
stood alone and bright as fire.

The tears ran back under his lids as he
thought of the first tree planted so
near him like a friend in the garden.¹⁰

Genesis and Love. Adam and Christ. The garden and the
tree. Eccentric and concentric. Man was constantly at the center of
Thomas' "spinning" days of creation and Love whirled the world
he made.

⁹Dylan Thomas, "The Tree" in *The Map of Love*.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

Vernon Watkins

*Portrait of a Friend**

He has sent me this
Late and early page
Caught in the emphasis
Of last night's cartonnage,
Crumpled in the post,
Bringing to lamplight
Breath's abatement
Over- and under-statement
Mute as a mummy's pamphlet
Long cherished by a ghost.

Who for annunciation has
The white wings of the sheldrake,
Labouring water's praise
The blind shriek of the mandrake,
Broken shells for story,
Torn earth for love's near head
Raised from time's estuary,
Fed by the raven's bread ;
A trespasser in tombs,
He bids the grey dust fall,
Groans in the shaping limbs :
'All stars are in my shawl.'
Who feels the deathbound sighs,
Mocks the Winged Horse's fake,
Toiling, as with closed eyes,
Love's language to remake
To draw from their dumb wall
The saints to a wordly brothel
That a sinner's tongue may toll
And call the place Bethel.

Trusting a creaking house,
His roof is ruinous,
So mortal. A real wind
Beats on this house of sand
Two tides like ages buffet.
The superhuman, crowned
Saints must enter this drowned
Tide-race of the mind
To guess or understand
The face of this cracked prophet,
Which from its patient pall
I slowly take,
Drop the envelope,
Compel his disturbing shape,
And write these words on a wall
Maybe for a third man's sake.

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Roy Campbell

DYLAN THOMAS— THE WAR YEARS

Such a person as Dylan could only happen to one once in a lifetime. I met him and his beautiful muse and wife, Caitlin, under conditions of the direst poverty, after I turned up in London at the beginning of the last war when I came over from Spain to volunteer for the British Army but found they could not take me on for some time. We were all three in the same lodgings and I was struck with the fortitude, cheerfulness and generosity of this noble couple under conditions of the war-time blackout and blitz, in winter, with very little heat or food, under the strain of continuous, unrelieved poverty.

Dylan had been rejected from the Army and I was over age. Nearly all the other poets of our generation had either fled abroad or escaped conscription by getting themselves placed in lucrative sinecures in the new bureaucratic plutocracy which was one of the parasitically monstrous births of the War. The more "proletarian" and fiercely belligerent they had been in peace-time, the more plutocratic and cowardly they were in war-time.

Till I could get in the army, I was the air-raid warden in charge of Post 33, in a district that caught it hot by reason of its proximity to three of the biggest railway stations. The Thomases were in the same cheap lodgings in this district as myself and yet they never lost their wonderful zest and good humour. Though they had been married some time, they quarrelled like "newly-weds" and were passionately in love with one another to the last day of Dylan's life. Caitlin was always the supreme muse and love of this great poet, the apple of his blazing eyes, and the life of his still more blazing voice. It was her fortitude and love that carried this great man through the rough times we shared.

One day when I was off duty, Dylan and I decided to go on a begging and borrowing expedition round the offices of the new poetical plutocracy. Though we could hear their pocket books "crackling with bradburies" (as Dylan put it) as they lounged in their new armchairs, they all showed us the door till I thought of the happy idea of T. S. Eliot, then, as now, regarded as "the cat's whiskers" and unapproachable. We got into the great man's office by some sort of miracle and were treated to true Christian charity which saved us days of anxiety. Dylan always remembered that good turn and we spoke of it the last time we met.

As to Caitlin, I saw her yesterday blazing with the same apparently immortal beauty as you find in Dylan's verse, and which she largely contributed to it. For she still has all the youth, vitality, and strength of his verse.

I shall not say anything about Dylan's wonderful poetry, which speaks for itself. But not everyone knew his generosity, kindness, endurance of hardship, and complete lack of conceit or swelled-headedness, which made him love his fellowmen and be loved by them in return as few men have been loved. The army lost a good soldier and a grand comrade when Dylan failed in his "medical." He was the finest comrade and companion any man could have and a real man, in spite of being a poet!

John Montague

A FIRST RESPONSE

In one of his few comments upon his own poetry, Thomas has described it as "the record of his individual struggle from darkness towards some measure of light," and hoped that it "should be useful to others for its individual recording of that same struggle with which they were necessarily acquainted." To realize the truth of that statement one would have to read the anthologies of the period, the poetry produced by the generation of writers younger than the Auden grouping of the early thirties. The climax of nervous subjectivity came in the war-time anthologies of the "New Apocalypse" and "Neo-Romantic" movements, and it was not so much Thomas's influence as a general condition. He was almost alone, however, in making real poetry out of his dilemma.

On almost the incendiary eve
Of several near deaths,
When one at the great least of your best loved
And always known must leave
Lions and fires of his flying breath,
Of your immortal friends
Who'd raise the organs of the counted dust
To shoot and sing your praise,
One who called deepest down shall hold his peace
That cannot sink or cease
Endlessly to his wound
In many married London's estranging grief.¹

Poets of an earlier generation, Eliot or Auden, with technical skills already developed, and some idea of the pattern working itself out in the rather terrifying events of contemporary history,

¹"Deaths and Entrances" from Dylan Thomas, *Collected Poems*, p. 129.

could move forward to the construction of long poems. The young, however, with scant schooling and no pattern that they knew of applying, had to live on their nerves which did not make for good writing. In my own case, a discovery of Thomas's poetry ran parallel to my own attempt to move from "darkness towards some measure of light," through the confusion of the years from 1939 onwards. In those years, even for those under twenty, self destruction or terror were almost normal temptations. "Deaths and Entrances," should, I think, be read with some sense of the background best expressed, probably, by David Gascoigne in his war-time volume of poems.

I first discovered the volume, "Deaths and Entrances," through reading the poem, "A Refusal to Mourn," in *Lilliput*, a popular magazine. It was accompanied by an analysis, by William Empson, which, in my comparative innocence, I found a great deal more difficult than the poem. I did not understand the poem completely, or the volume, but I recognized the obsessions, and the poetry communicated long before I was capable of making a full analysis in terms of structure and imagery. Now that I come to think of it, the fact that I came upon Thomas's poetry in a popular magazine was not so strange: he more than any poet of his time, seems to have prided himself upon taking life as it came. "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog," for example, showed another way of reacting to the problem of city life, a good many years after "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock": the way of half horrified, half-picaresque nightmare. The dance-halls, the hideous seaside resorts, the holiday makers in session in the pub; upon these things adolescence had been lavished and the artist could not reject his material. It was the world we breath, take it or leave it.

When somewhat later I removed from Northern Ireland to Dublin, I did not hear much praise of Thomas's work; here I was to discover a different form of introversion, even less healthy. There was even a feeling of resentment at the fact that a Welshman had outdone an Irishman in "the lovely gift of the gab." Southern Ireland, having known a phoenix in her youth, had settled into a quiet and very Christian sleep, entirely separate from

the course of contemporary history, and there was a suggestion that for anyone to feel as strongly about things as Mr. Thomas evidently did was slightly indecent. In the circumstances the only literature possible was one of protest; as witness the *Great Hunger* of Mr. Patrick Kavanagh, which almost brought its author to jail.

I confess I find nothing strange in the great technical skill in Thomas's work; anyone familiar with Gaelic or Welsh poetry will recognize the same highly developed delight in craftsmanship, alliteration, internal rhyme and repetition. If anything, Welsh or Irish poetry was more sophisticated and stylized than anything in English. There is as fine a tradition of the *amour courtois* in Welsh as in Provençal, for instance. Again, the oracular tone in Thomas's work—what is popularly called "the bardic note"—is part of the Welsh and Irish tradition; you get it also in the work of Yeats who is consciously writing for a country. The famous complaint of O'Bruadair, and that of a good many other Gaelic poets, assumes that the country is the poet's subject and audience, whereas the majority of contemporary poets have long been unaware of any, except their fellow poets. This bardic convention, a kind of national megaphone that allows the writer to speak with full strength, not passivity, is not, of course, the whole explanation of Thomas's attitude towards his craft; but it is present, certainly, and to an Irishman or Scotchman or Welshman seems quite natural. Nothing however can account for the gift of language in the *Collected Poems*; this was a miracle restricted to Dylan Thomas.

I have not attempted to analyze any of the more difficult poems or to trace the influences in Thomas's work. One might legitimately guess, however, that he had read both Yeats and Joyce, two other masters of "a personal flow of chat," both belonging to, and yet outside of, the English tradition. The structure and swing of many of his long poems reminds me of Milton's "Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity," a comparison which in the verse of this century is rather unusual. Even leaving aside those poems in which one is not certain as to whether the "momentary peace" is achieved or not, it is easy to count almost twenty poems which are

without flaw, and which will last as long as the language. Fuller examination is necessary, and the critical work which has already begun will expose us to the full impact of his work, from the early sense of destruction in the "process" of nature and life—"I see the boys of summer in their ruin"—through the ambiguous vision prayers of the middle period to the recovery of youthful happiness in "Fern Hill." His development from rigid to elaborate stanzas; his use of highly compressed language: "a grief ago," "a chrysalis unwinking on the iron"; his use of colours like "green" connoting innocence, "red," violation, are endless and rewarding.

Dylan Thomas was not the greatest poet of his time, as his admirers claim, but he has certainly written great poetry and in a way, his narrowness of scope was his preservation. To some extent, we can now see how he fitted his time and place: only a lyric poet, a poet of introspection saying "man be my metaphor," could have come to maturity before, after and during the Second World War. His poetry was not escape or personal fantasy, since death and suffering are present, though not in the shape in which we have become familiar with them, but another and totally unexpected contribution to the poetry of the century. It is a case of travelling far in Concord, or Laugharne, though alas, as the century moves on, such radiant individuality will become more and more rare.

Roland Ryder-Smith

Deep in Stoneage Britain

Now in this flinty cubicle of thought
What primal and what purity of darkness here,
Ravaged by rush-wicks sputtering in deer grease,
Each wavering gleam to be reflected, magnified
By his ancestral eyes grim under their brows of
chalk.

To camerize this thumbprint of his hairy hand,
Project him on the screen of mind while he inscribes
Cabbala among the wild white bones
And the charnel of his mothers whom death flung
upward
On a mound of midden, on a hearth of artifact.

To hear tongues of the forgotten rave
In a pre-Pictish incoherency, mumble
Through low chalk-dusty viaducts of lineage,
And in these white catacombs of awareness
Feel the faint echoes of forever.

Gavin Hyde

THE HIGHCHAIR

Usually, when they drove into the city, Harvey began to feel excited as soon as they got past Morrows' place, the last truck-garden. Until that point you just looked at the green rows swinging around and around like whirling on the edge of a quiver of arrows and never getting anywhere. And then there were the first big signs, things you could really go into, sort of movies, like the Silverbird Hotel sign that had the tan girl and the shiny black-haired man in a yellow shirt and trunks having a tug-of-war with one of those rubber horses beside a swimming pool.

But today he looked mostly at the floorboard and thought about the family argument, and when he did look up interestedly at the approaching city it was so his father wouldn't think he was ready to go back on the way he felt about the haircut. It made him remember the day two years ago when he had told them he wanted low shoes instead of high ones, but he was young then and when he ran from the house up into the dunes on the edge of the celery field he had found a dove's nest in the big pine tree. He hadn't brought up the shoes when he came back in for lunch.

He wished there were no stoplights because every time they had to sit there with the motor idling quietly his father would chuckle, trying to deny for both of them that they were not speaking to each other. And when the green flashed his father would look to the left and then to the right with exaggerated twisting of the neck and lifting of the eyebrows to show that he was driving as usual and not thinking about Harvey's hair.

As they passed the Farmers' Market his father stretched his hand to the dashboard for a second as though to brush away a mote of dust. It was only three blocks to the barbershop. "There's no point in any of us making a fuss about it, is there Harvey? I mean it doesn't make any difference whether Mom does it or the barber, *really.*"

Why couldn't he have just driven him down? What did the old man expect him to say? As they coasted across one of the side streets he saw four girls in skirts and sweaters, walking abreast, books jutting out off their hips. Harvey wanted to point to them and say, "There's the difference!" but it wouldn't have made any sense and they were out of sight now anyway. He pulled the woolen cuffs back on his leather jacket.

"Of course, as I said to Mom, it's your money. If you don't want to save it..."

"A dollar," Harvey said.

"Well, I myself thought that Mom always did a fine job. Better than a barber, I'd say! You don't see me going downtown for a haircut, not for years..."

Why didn't he stop? "Me either, Dad... not for years, fourteen years," he said, laughing at the same time so that it wouldn't be taken for impertinence. But his laughter just made his forehead burn. There was only one block to go.

"That's the thing I can't figure out, boy. All of a sudden, *today*, Mom can't do it any more. Never heard a thing about it before. I must say, the more I think of it, the sillier it makes you look." He turned to the curb in front of the curling red white and blue sign. "You could work it out with Mom, you know, just tell her what you want her to do—but as I say, I'm not the one to make a fuss."

He saw his father's hand move toward the ignition key, so he slid out, closed the door quickly, and nodded and waved through the glass. His father shrugged, and the car moved away.

Through the plate glass windows, gauze curtained, he could see the white coats moving next to the chairs, passing from one mirrored side to the other, and the mouths of the barbers working, telling their incredible tales of racetracks, drunks, and dope rings, and the big men with their always polished shoes showing under the white covers. The men who sat quietly and listened, making the decisions of business in this idle moment. His father had said "... not for years." More likely, not ever. He did not see his father's irrigation boots against the black and cream tiles, nor his calloused finger pointing out his choice among the bottles

of sweet emerald hair oil (or the lemon yellow, cherry and olive green).

He saw dimly the ceiling, the black fan slavishly turning down air, but the kings of the town, settled in their tall white thrones, never looked up.

When he put his hand on the thick curve of the door handle and pressed down with his thumb he heard the glass rumbling in the frame and then the voices and the smells came to him directly, no separation any more, as if all this took place in an aquarium and one were either in it or not in it. He stepped across the tiles in front of the man who was reading in a wicker chair.

The air was like lemonade here, not an old sour smell, but a cold one with sugar in it. On the shelf behind the barbers the tools lay on the white cloth, a cactus garden of blades and tweezers. Occasionally there appeared the armored backs of the electric shears, tusked like beetles. And behind each barber was one jar full of combs immersed in fluid, so many preserved examples of the first vertebrates.

As he brushed against the potted palm in the center of the wall opposite the barbers, one of them nodded to him and with bent hand offered his chair. The tall porcelain with its bands of chrome and crinkled leather seats were there now. All he had to do was go and sit. But he didn't want to make any mistakes.

He pointed to the man who was looking at the magazine. "He was here first . . ."

At this the other two barbers stopped talking and stared at Harvey for a moment and there was an imperceptible pause in the constant snipping and snapping of the scissors. Then, with fish eyes, they turned back to their heads.

"He's finished, waiting for his friend," the barber said, a gentle urging in his voice, and Harvey noticed now that the man had indeed obviously just had a haircut and a shave and was looking at him, wondering.

He thought he might take off his jacket, but then decided against it. The collar felt good to the back of his neck, better than ever. He walked over and put one toe on the edge of the footrest

and lifted himself into the seat with both hands on the arms of the chair. The footrest wobbled crazily, so that he almost fell into the leather seat and he leaned over and looked at the thing. It was all carved with flowers and birds except in the middle where so many feet had worn it shiny. No one ever put his feet on the edge, probably that was it.

As he sat back the hairy wrist of the barber came around past his eyes and the big white cape, settling over his body, sent a rush of air past his neck. When they buried people they wrapped them in cloth. Funny to think of that now. The narrow toilet paper thing wound itself about his neck and he swallowed to see if his Adam's apple would still go up and down under it. There were some metallic noises behind him. He looked over at the other men in their chairs and they didn't seem to notice anything. They were so still. Looking straight ahead. If he called to them would they hear him? The other barbers would just go on with their scissors and trembling hands. They were three separate chairs.

He wished he had gotten a better look at his barber.

He turned his head a little and strained to look out of the corner of his eye until it hurt but he couldn't see what the man was doing.

Then, with a "Jou say somethin', boy?" the barber's face was in front of his, remote from the smocked body, as if it were floating in the air. His eyes had black flecks in them in the blue around the pupil and all the wrinkles in his face went up and back to join his hair which also grew upward in two thick handles over his ears. His eyebrows were thick and unruly at the ends. They looked more like tarry twigs than hair. Harvey dropped his chin onto his chest and said nothing, waiting.

The barber jammed down on the handle that was part of his chair and he felt himself squirting up. He thought of Eddie Stilman's pump gun. Now all the barber had to do was press a button and he would go flying high up through the roof in his rocket chair over the fading laughter of the shop. He heard a click behind him and his hand gripped the arms of the chair under the white cloth. But there was just the soft hum of the horned shears. The buzzing dug in under the hair at the base of his neck, and continued

slowly up and around his ears. Once he moved his head slightly and he felt immediately the firm pressure of the barber's hand on the top of his head, so that he couldn't move any more. The constant buzz seemed to have vibrated into his brain now and he felt himself going into a kind of noise-coma, from which he could not awake until there was silence.

He kept his eyes on the potted plant because that was the one thing that he could be sure of in all the glass and metal and tile.

When the buzzing stopped and he really opened his eyes he saw that there was a man in a green double breasted suit standing beside the plant, watching him. He must have come through the door, when the electric shears were going.

While the barber was skimming over his head with the scissors and pinching him around the ears he smiled instantly at the man in green. He was real like the plant, but he could hear and save a person if a person were in trouble. The little touches and finger movements were moving all over his head now. Like spiders, they jumped from place to place, pulling a hair, patting one down, weaving taut lines around his brain. He wanted to speak, say, "That's O.K., that's fine, we're through now, aren't we?" but the paper around his throat, and the cloth was over his body and hands so that he couldn't even gesture. He pleaded silently with the man in the green suit.

There was a clink among the bottles, the rainbow of liquids that he had seen and thought about with pleasure when he came in, but whose smell made him uneasy now. If he had known how, he might have been able to stop it but all he could do was sit while it was shaken and with a little whistling sound was poured into the barber's hand somewhere over his head and then brought down with a drenching coldness into his hair. He could count the ten fingerpoints as they dug into his scalp. He was going to cry out. He was going to!

The barber ran a comb through his hair, parted it, passed it three or four times over front and back. His scalp was cold and shrunken. Drops of sweat were running down his sides in the tented interior of the seat. At least it was over! His hand found

his pocket and the dollar bill and held it tightly; he could hand it to the barber and get out.

But the barber turned on some water and after it had run until there was the subtle smell of steam in the air, sloshed in it and then appeared beside him with a smoking towel, folded into a mat.

His back was wheeled down and his feet up until he was horizontal. He saw the towel coming at his face, the smile of the barber and the way his eyebrows worked and his yellow teeth as he pushed the cloth forward, and he knew that he must get the man in green to help him now. He lifted his head and said "Mister!" but he had time only to see the man make a conspiratory signal to the barber, who snickered out loud. Then the hotness was on his chin, his lips, curving to his nose, his eyelids, up his forehead to the cold hair. His skin and the towel became one, fused by the steam. When he breathed the hot air was palpable as milk. He moved his hands under the sheet but they could not free themselves. The man was not going to save him. There was no one.

When he moved his lips he touched the hot toweling with his tongue. He withdrew it far back into his mouth, tasting the sweet flour taste of cotton in the dark.

Slowly at first came the snick, snack. He heard it between the murmured words in the barber shop. Then the rhythm quickened until it was an almost steady hiss of blade on leather. The light above blinded him when the towel was removed. His face was tender and full. The barber bent over him with the shaving cream, spreading it in white mountains that he could see when he rolled his eyes downward. He saw the blade once as it shot in and out of his range of vision, silver-bellied as a leaping fish. The metal edge touched, went through the cream and slid down to his neck. He pressed the back of his head into the little pillow, couldn't get away, and thought of lifting his head, but the blade was there against him. Why hadn't they asked him if he wanted a shave? He had said nothing about a shave!

And why was the man smiling and the barber smiling. (The barber had called him "Sir") and the others all reading a newspaper and purposely not seeing what was being done to him?

The wrinkles in the face above him hung down, veinless, and the blue-black eyes were fixed on the blade where it touched him. Then the face turned questioningly to the man in the green suit, who leaned forward, just an inch!

With the final strength that throws a man a thousand miles from the climax of a nightmare to his motionless bed, Harvey pulled his fist from his pocket and elbowed the barber's arm away from him. He stood and jumped dizzily across the space between the chairs and the potted palm.

The barber's knuckles were white on the razor handle.

Harvey backed to the door. Then, he opened his hand and the dollar floated to the tiles.

"I didn't ask for a shave!" He was breathing hard. It was almost a whisper, but he felt as if he were yelling.

He stepped backward again as he opened the door. He scraped the shaving cream off the left side of his face with his index finger. The barber was shouting at him through the thick glass when he closed it.

He caught a ride out the highway on a vegetable truck. It was cool up high in the wind on the celery crates and his hands went up to close the collar of his leather jacket, but he never did close it. He stood up and yanked it off his arms and flung it out. It sailed like a dead leaf to the shoulder of the road, where the dust curled upward and then fell upon it.

Clarence Alva Powell

Storm

Sound traversed the network of the nerves,
And jangled inharmoniously. The brain
Antenna quivered, strained to hold the tones
That curved around the universal chaos.
Drifting clouds, intangible desires,
Were fired by lightning, thunder-smitten, rift
Asunder and relieved of heavy rain.

The glare, the shock, reverberating, shook
Entanglement of sky and earth, and left
The figures prone, bereft of hearing, eyes
Unlooking staring at the crooked finger.
But taut emotions, drawn to fever pitch,
Are twitching nerves inured to frenzy caught
Securely to the terror in the heart.

David Horne

A GLASS OF SHANDY

The Four Tuns is a pub just off Greek Street in the heart of Soho. It is in one of those concealed lanes which twist and coil on themselves as if trying to escape from the grasp of the bohemian colony into the open spaces of Leicester Square or New Oxford. As often as not, however, such streets terminate in a dead end.

There is nothing about the Four Tuns to attract a stranger. On a winter evening the light inside barely manages to filter through the fog-grimed windows. Once inside the saloon bar you have to pause a moment, for tentacles of the mist outside seem to have permanently wrapped themselves around the two yellow lights in the dark, beamed ceiling, the lamps on the counter at the far end of the gloomy room being too feeble for double duty.

Filling the open space are four small tables, each with two chairs. At the counter there are four stools. To the right are two lavatory doors. To the left, a window framed in heavy velvet.

Behind the counter the pump handles gleam bravely through the murk—one for mild and one for bitter—and behind the handles the glasses shine. There is usually a middle-aged barmaid reading a paper at one end of the counter. On the occasion I have in mind she bent over a small child's music box. Two swarthy men muffled in long overcoats with fur collars were sitting at the counter watching. The barmaid was cranking the music box, and as she cranked, it played "Happy Birthday," the notes coming out thin but surprisingly true and hauntingly melodious.

This was the only sound in the room, for the other occupants—two couples seated at tables near the gas fire in the corner—were not conversing at the moment. One of these couples, the one nearest the fire, was composed of a young American and a middle-aged Englishman. The American looked as though he might be a

school teacher on leave of absence. He wore his hair close-clipped around the ears, and rimless glasses. He had a bow tie, thinner than the continental type. His British companion was Blimpish, heavily tweeded, gray at the temples and red of cheek bone. His eyes looked as though the beaded bubbles were beginning to wink less brightly on the brim of the glass he rhythmically raised and lowered.

At the table next to them sat a man on the hopeless side of forty, wearing the typical three-piece blue pinstripe, and opposite him a girl somewhat younger. She was clad in black taffeta with white collar and cuffs, her dark, shoulder-length hair swept back behind the ears. The man's face was turned away at the moment as he leaned over to tie his shoe. Even in the sleazy light the girl's mask-like layer of cake make-up was obvious. Underneath, however, her face lacked the flinty impassivity of the typical London lower-class sophisticate, perhaps because of the mouth, which was mobile, and the eyes, which burned with a surcharge of passion as she followed her companion's every move.

If one listened carefully he became aware of a steady hiss emanating from the gas fire in the corner, so low that it was almost drowned out by the tinkle of the music box as it played "Happy Birthday" over and over again. At the conclusion of each rendition the three at the counter would laugh softly and converse in low tones. Then the barmaid would begin to crank again, and the familiar staccato of the notes would intrude itself into the quiet, like handfuls of small pebbles dropped into a pool.

The man sitting opposite the girl commenced to speak. It was impossible not to hear. "No wonder you feel that way," he was saying. "You're drinking shandy. Have a gin." His hair was black and his eyebrows were heavy and almost met above his nose, but his eyes were bright and innocent, and his mouth was drawn down at the corners in a kind of mischievous smirk.

The girl said nothing. Her companion continued. "The old man used to say, there's nothing will improve gin and nothing gin won't improve. Irish makes you sentimental and Scotch makes you row, he used to say. Beer makes you go on about something,

and cider makes you go to the gent's, but when you drink gin you couldn't care less."

The girl held her glass between the palm of her hands and twisted it slowly first one way, then the other. The amber liquid splashed against the sides of the glass. She spoke without changing expression. "I couldn't care less right now." She pronounced *right* as though it were spelled *raht*. She said, "I don't care for the whole flippin' world."

"The trouble with you," he insisted, "is too much shandy. It's an in-between drink."

"In the last three years," she murmured, "you've said that twenty flippin' times."

The man gazed into space as though checking the accuracy of the count.

"How's Hazel?" asked the girl.

"Up and down." He explained, "First she's up and then she's down."

"Do you know Dickings?" she asked suddenly.

Her friend extracted a cigarette stub from a silvered case, lit it with a wooden match, holding both hands to his face as though shielding the flame from a draft, and inhaled deeply. "What's this about Dickens?" he asked, shaking the match and dropping it on the floor.

She shrugged. "I don't know. There's a bod comes in every night looks a proper Scrooge. Pinched-up, with a bowler, and a scarf around his neck. Always fish and chips. Nothing but fish and chips. And a thruppenny tip."

The man thought a moment. "Perhaps tomorrow she'll be bad again. Her mother will be there to take care of the boy. I could slip out and meet you at eight."

"The day after is Christmas. What am I going to do Christmas day?"

"I told you before. I can't leave the boy."

"What about me?"

"We've been over that before."

"Yes," she said. She held up her glass. "Here's to Selfridge's and the Christmas spirit."

"Come off it," muttered the man.

"Here's to Father Christmas," she said. "Father Christmas Past." She sipped her shandy.

"Oh, for God's sake," said the man.

The Britisher at the next table suddenly came to life. "Speaking of ambiguity," he began, as if there had been no pause, "I suppose the classic example for us British is Harry Graham's alteration of the old hymn,

'Peace, perfect peace, is found, they say,
Only with loved ones far away.'

Did I ever tell you about my batman, Donkin?"

The American school teacher, who had been gazing out the fog-stained window, swung toward him somewhat reluctantly. "I think not," he said.

"Donkin had left a wife and seven kiddies in Camden Town to join the Forces. We were posted to India, and he wrote several times a week for five years, sent her most of the pay that was left after the allotments, and talked about her constantly. When he was demobbed he headed straight for Camden Town, where I happened to run into him, pushing a barrow, several months later. 'How's your wife?' I asked as I was leaving. He grinned. 'Ow, daon't mention her Mijor!' 'Why not?' 'I prefers to forget her during business hours.' 'Nothing wrong between you, I hope?' 'No, between us everything is fine.' 'And the kiddies?' 'They're fine.' 'Then what's the trouble?' 'There's no trouble. It's just that I only sees her once a fortnight. You understand, Mijor, it helps to preserve the mystery'."

The story seemed to be over, so the school teacher asked, politely, "Who found the perfect peace, Donkin's wife?"

"Really, dear fellow," said the Major, "there are only two loves which bring peace: love of God and love of a good bottle of port."

The school teacher nodded. He glanced over at the next table, where the girl was saying, "I wouldn't care if the whole bloody world knew."

"But what about the boy?" asked her friend.

"What about me? Don't I count for nothing? I've got to build. I can't build on 'buts'."

The Major overheard. "Peace of mind!" he said. "Yes, how few of us find it."

"How few of us really want it," mused the school teacher.

"Dear boy, we all want it, don't you think? But we don't know where it lies."

"It lies like an old soldier—in the grass for a night with the farmer's daughter. 'I'll come back,' he whispers. 'I love you only.' If she believes, that is security for both of them for a while. Peace of mind consists of thinking that you want what you're getting, without knowing that you don't really, you only want to want it and believe in it."

"It's a blinking awful paradox and I disagree. We all have our Innisfree somewhere. D'ya mean to say it's illusion? I've known peaceful men who said they found all they wanted in life and seemed quite content with it."

"So have I," said the school teacher. "They were very old, with faulty memories."

"What about you?" said the Major.

"Why do you think I'm in England?" he answered.

Behind the counter, the barmaid was tuning the wireless.

"Turn off that Third Programme!" called one of the fur-collared men, in a slightly foreign accent. "Always a blighter telling us how to live, apologizing for being a Conservative, or for not being a Conservative."

"What about the Home?" asked the barmaid.

"No, the Light," he said. "Let's laugh. That's the Christmas spirit."

"I like the Home Service," she said.

"What does it matter what you like?" he said, and his companion laughed.

"'Ere," said the barmaid, "is that chivalrous?"

"Bli'me," said the man, turning to his companion. "I fergot me white charger!" *The Bli'me* sounded strange, pronounced with a foreign accent.

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The young girl was speaking again. 'If we could only set a time, I could plan.'

"You know I can't set a time," said the man. "Hazel is spiteful. She'd take it out on the boy. When he's old enough I can send him away to school."

"But that won't be for years."

"What can I do?"

She thought a moment. "You can get me another shandy."

He went to the barmaid with the order. As soon as his back was turned, the girl looked over at the school teacher. The Major had settled back and closed his eyes. The heat had made the two ruddy spots on his cheeks glow like the fire itself. The two young people gazed at each other without embarrassment, as though they understood each other. After a moment she looked away, but her eyes wandered back, and the school teacher smiled.

Her friend returned with the shandy. She held it up and looked through it. "Suppose I was to say I couldn't wait, Jim," she said. "Suppose I was to say, come now or never?" She said it without emotion, as she might have asked for a cigarette.

"What's the good of supposing?" said the man. He'd seen her looking at the school teacher and he half turned now, also looking in that direction, not as if he were concerned that she might be flirting, but merely curious.

The girl sipped her drink and then turned the glass between her palms, first one way, then the other. Around went the liquid, swishing against the sides but not quite spilling, and back it came again. "This is the good of it," she said, her eyes lowered. "I can't see you tomorrow."

"Why not?"

"I'm busy."

"A date?" She kept her eyes down. "Who is it?"

"He comes in regular. He asked me to the Albert."

"You'll be bored."

"No. I like music, and literature. He reads Dickens. You never read literature. He read me the *Christmas Carol*."

"In the restaurant?"

"No."

The man tossed off his gin and tonic and set the glass on the table. "I can't share you," he said.

She raised her voice. "What do you expect me to do, sit home night after night waiting for your wife to let you out?"

"Jesus, I told you I'd be around tomorrow."

"I won't be there."

The atmosphere had become tense. Both were leaning across the table glaring at each other. At this point the Major opened his eyes. "Do you know Entwhistle?" he asked. "The little chap with the big ears, like the toy rabbit in Selfridge's Christmas window? Well, he bought himself a Morris Minor last week and on Sunday he drove down to Surrey to visit his girl. Half way there—"

He broke off as the girl at the next table slapped her companion. They both rose and stood facing each other, the table between them. The Major gasped. The fur-coated men at the bar turned around. They looked at each other significantly and nodded. "Jim," called one, "you know what time it is?"

"What time is it?" said the man. He hadn't taken his eyes off the girl, nor did she look down. For an instant they appeared to have been photographed in position.

"Close to the Queen. If you aren't back in five minutes, they'll shut the bloody place without you."

The man picked up his cigarette case and slapped it into his waistcoat pocket. Turning quickly, he strode from the room without looking back. The two men at the bar hastily downed their drinks and followed.

The girl sank into her chair.

"Excuse me a moment," said the Major. He rose and walked unsteadily to the gentlemen's. The barmaid was tuning in the Home Programme on the wireless. The girl turned to the young man with such a weary expression around the eyes that he was more alarmed than if she had been distraught.

He leaned toward her. "Don't look so much like the ghost of Christmas Present," he whispered.

She brightened a little. "Do you like Dickens?"

He blushed slightly. "My favorite author. I also like music.

What about coming to the ballet with me tomorrow evening?"

She smiled. It was a soft smile, which relaxed the tautness of the lines about her eyes.

"Seven o'clock?" he said

"You've got a date."

They looked at each other with nothing to say. Out of the corner of his eye the young man observed the Major returning. "Bravo!" he said, and she smiled and nodded.

The major had seen them speaking. After he resumed his seat he moved over beside the young man and whispered, "Do you know her?"

"I think so," said the young man.

"Some of them around here you have to watch," said the Major. "They'll fiddle you."

The woman's neck reddened. "Do you mind if we leave now?" the young man asked.

"Not at all." The Major rose. "I was just about to suggest it."

At the door the young man suddenly excused himself and came back. "I don't know where to meet you tomorrow," he said.

She looked startled as she picked up the glass of shandy. "Thanks," she said. "I won't forget."

"But where shall we meet?"

Again she appeared surprised. "Do you really want to see me?"

"Of course."

"You're an American, aren't you?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Why do you want to see me?"

He hesitated. "I—I don't know. I am lonely, I guess." She nodded. He said, "I thought you were just pretending about having a date. I couldn't help hearing."

She nodded again. "I was pretending." She regarded him quizzically. "You really want to see me?"

"Yes."

"Look for me in St. Giles' churchyard."

He frowned. "You'll really be there?"

She didn't answer.

After a while he shrugged and rejoined the Major, who was

waiting at the door. The Major appeared to be about to say something, but the American pushed past and stepped into the foggy lane outside.

He peered in through the window. She sat at the table, twisting the glass between her palms, but not quite spilling it. Always the glass came back to where it started. Shandy, he thought, is an in-between drink, half cider, half beer.

The barmaid was leaning over the wireless, listening with rapt attention to the Home Service. The gas fire in the corner burned redly through the shadow. A stranger would have said it was very peaceful in there. But very few strangers found their way through the maze of Soho lanes to this pub.

Peter Viereck

The Final Relapse of Tannhauser

Etched in the rusty shield of gules and sable,
With blood and fire gushing from his gorge,
The ancient dragon of the fable
Sinks beneath the javelin of Saint George.

A rusty sword points to some hellish nadir—
How long since last it nicked a Turk?
And where its master? Where that stern Crusader?
Swordless and dragon-kissing in the dark!

He alone has not grown older,
Though seeds grow tall and topple in the field
As staves to rest some future pilgrim-shoulder
And sprout in Rome. The grass has hid his shield—

On which the ancient dragon of the fable,
Gushing blood and fire from his gorge,
Sinks on a coat-of-arms of gules and sable
Beneath the javelin of Saint George.

Emilie Glen

CAIN TO CAIN

"Walked up," said Marsden Chandler's brother whisking his lateness from the Christmas rush. "I walked from my coldwater flat, partly to save a dime. So cold down there it freezes the paints."

Stapled loose as a cardboard puppet, he stood shivering on the museum steps, his paint-clotted jeans worn to holes in the knees, a windbreaker red as ears and cheekbones, giving way to a shirt whose red reared at the jacket, his hair a squirrel mix of brown and grey, blown to bangs over his forehead, a plaid scarf from another palette tied about his neck in the desperate style of those susceptible to sore throats. Shallow eyes, brown-grey, had the painters depth of seeing.

A couple of days ago, I had cabbied down to his phoneless walkup, looking for his brother, who had promised to be a guest speaker at the Art Students League where I teach aesthetics.

"Brother is off painting Guatemala," he'd said, and seizing hold of my mental lapels, shook me into a discussion of the moderns, letting go with my promise to meet him at the Metropolitan. "Something I must show you," he said. "A painting."

"Daddy—Daddy," Kev left his rail slide to pull at my overcoat pocket, as Mr. Chandler made binoculars of reddened hands in focus with the weathered yellow of museum stone and the yellow folded into clouds. "What's he seeing? What does he want up there?"

"Yellow, my little man," said Mr. Chandler, "yellow in stone and cloud."

"All I want is some yellow butter on a nice baked potato" . . . Kev romped questions around him up the steps to the museum . . . "Is there really a restaurant? How can they have tables and everything in with all the paintings and statues?"

The check-room attendant waited, squeeze-faced, for Mr. Chandler to unwind from his scarf which ended up in the wind-breaker pocket, dislodging a package lean and loose-wrapped like himself. "A Christmas present for brother dear."

Kev's eyes measured Mr. Chandler's still bulging pocket. "Anything left in there for me?"

"Living alone, I never make much of Christmas. What if I were to give you this present for my brother? It's a brush, a red sable brush. But we'll see..."

Crossing hands with Kev, he started him in skater's glide along the marble hall, rode the stair rail with him, landing feet up before the *Weird in Art* exhibit—Bosch entrails, Dante's damned, Bresdin's riders in the night—that tortured the way to the cafeteria.

"Just a Halloween hangover," he quieted Kev who was all but falling into a double image.

Going down the sandwich bin like a row of organ stops, he pulled out roast beefs, bolognas, egg, cheese, piling some on his tray, jamming others into his pockets. "The world may not owe me a living," he said, wolfing a roast beef, "but the Metropolitan Museum owes me a lunch as you'll see when I show you what we came for."

The cashier stirred her hips after him as he broke out of line. "Just put it on my check," I said.

"How do I know what he's stuffed into his mouth already?"

"Oh, yes, the formalities," said Mr. Chandler through wads of bread. "One roast beef going down, and reserves in my pocket." He took out sandwiches, sketch pad, charcoal, and the present to his brother.

"Do I get it?" asked Kevie. "Do I get the paintbrush?"

"If I give it to you, promise you'll never be bound by brush or pencil. Use palette knife, fingernails, the other end of your brush, anything that will make the paints do what you want."

"I have finger paints—I paint with my fingers—" Kev all but dipped them into the strawberry jello.

"But not because somebody says they're finger paints. Find out for yourself." He drew on air with the brush in its package. "His present will never reach Guatemala in time for Christmas. No

trouble mixing his paints in that clime except perhaps they flow too fast."

In a huddle with the exposed pipes of the basement, he crouched over beans and frankfurters. "His presents to me arrived in proper time, a smoking jacket when he knows I need brushes, paints, canvases" . . . Using his knife like a palette scraper, he worked at the painted wood of the table . . . "We've been mixed up in each other's paints since nursery days when Dad set us at drawing boards side by side, water colors in their glass coasters, bright as Christmas tree ornaments. Slapped many a paintbrush across each other's work at so much as a muscle twitch against it" . . . He slapped the air with his knife before dipping it into the mustard pot.

"Dad was always conducting art contests for the two of us, hanging the prize picture in the studio among his detective story illustrations. My *almosts* seldom won over Marsden's *sure things* that he'd draw with ease while I'd work a hole through the paper laying color on color. From my first grade eminence I lost to my brother still in kindergarten. Dad passed over my try at snowflakes in the night for his unmistakable snow man, framed it in shining glass that needled me into hurling a jar of yellow paint that shattered the glass, egged down the snowman's vest. Such a gobby nice yellow that I mixed away my anger, working a paintbrush around to sun blossoms until Dad locked up my paints."

His ear lobe ruddied to a pulling that must have stretched it from years of workouts . . . "The red, the juiciest burst-berry red, ran later when Marsden caught up with me in school because the brothers shouldn't be separated. We sat side by side in art class, working to outpaint each other. Without Dad as judge I thought I'd have a chance, but the first picture he did got preferred hanging—his Indian Village in the exhibit room, while my fire-light stayed back on the classroom wall. In the studio Dad had set up for us at home, Marsden, moping around for a subject, would squint at what I was doing and reach over to correct a line. The day he hashed my rhythm with his strokes I sent a jar of red paint juicing down the harbor scene he had set aside

to frame for a contest" . . . He rubbed his reddish stubble as if stroking angora.

"Think I'm always Cain? He was Cain the time the judges divided a painting award between us that would bring us both to New York with scholarships to the Art Students League, an award bestowed in such a fashion, I suspect, to keep the brothers together in yet another school" . . . His jaw champed bit-wise . . . "no hurled pots that day. I can't show scars to flesh or canvas, but when we were called to the stage to receive our awards, brother told the judges in tones cool as his seascapes when the vein in his temple was forked lightning, 'In all fairness my brother's picture should be disqualified. I corrected so many of his lines that it couldn't be considered his.' The judges stayed with their decision, but I wanted no award that would send me to the same school with him. Still, to feel our existence we must always be at each other. I came to New York to study on my own."

"Did he attempt to apologize for what he—"

"Cain to Cain? Never."

His features were the very tilt of good humor until you saw that every line was tight wired, and the crinkle about his eyes like the crinkle to his voice, in animus.

"About the time I found a teacher who gave me wing spread, Marsden suggested the two of us try for an award that would take the winner to Florence for four years of study. To savor any art contest, my brother had to win over me, a pleasure I denied him. He sailed off to Italy without knowing for certain he'd be the brother on the deck of that ship had I entered the contest.

"The years apart worked us up to a coming together. When the ship docked he walked down the gangplank looking more the importer than the creator of *objets d'art*, I hitched my belt and stepped forward, a professional painter who had exhibited a picture or two at Village art galleries, made a couple of sales, might edge into an uptown gallery . . . but only as belonging to a certain school, being *ist*, painting another's *ism*. Couldn't stop in another spread shade—I had to go on . . ."

Raying into Kev's pencil strokes that tried to soar an ice skater across the paper plate, he bit at the knuckle of his brush

finger near the scab where he had cut through the skin with his razored teeth.

"All the to-do of a one-man show went into the display of our interim canvases to one another. The work he set before me—colors like struck crystal, not color trickled onto lines but drawing and color caught up in thrusts and tensions, volumes and spatial toward inter-rhythms that use nature's movements, a lifted arm, distended sail, only when it furthers the rhythms within the picture itself."

"And what of your canvases? How did he react when you showed him yours?"

"Hypercritical, which made me feel the power in my brush. He accused me of hiding poor drawings behind innovation, but inquired into my effects. We took a hard look at each other, my brother and I, and saw that we had grown to be brother artists." . . . His fingers with their paint-crustured nails curled as to a palette . . . "Lost time from my easel getting him recognition; introduced him around; tried uptown galleries through connections that hadn't gotten me further than untying my portfolio, but who opened wall space to him. Brother was catching on in months beyond anything I had done in years; the name Chandler, Marsden Chandler, stippled across the art columns . . ."

In a scramble through his packets, he came out with a tobacco pouch and cigarette paper, rolling his own lightly as the feathered strokes of a brush, nimbly tightening the pouch with his teeth . . . "Caged in success, Marsden went round and round on its ferris wheel, handing down more and more canvases to a public asking for more of the same; yet he had the creativeness to go on. Mars shouted at me to hop a ride with the school that was rising in recognition, but I had returned to canvas, white, untouched, fibered, as it was in the beginning. Before setting a stroke in motion, I would stand, brush wet with paint, through bells chiming the quarter hour, stand inscaping cosmic truth."

Kev banged down his pencil with a squeaky cry close to tears. "Rats, I just can't get my skater to skate."

"Bend the knee, arch the back . . ." Mr. Chandler reached over to Kev's work but stopped short of correcting his lines . . . "No,

I'll not touch your drawing or it won't be yours anymore. Watch..." He dumped salt and crusts from a sandwich plate and traced action lines for Kev to follow.

As Kev reworked the leg in air, Mr. Chandler stared into his tufty head as if it had formed a double image... "A bit liquored at the preview of brother's sixth, or was it his seventh, one-man show, I behaved badly, I've been told. With people darkening around pictures that repeated all his other shows, I sounded off. 'Good as far as you go,' I said, 'but you could be great. Certain critics agree with me that you've stopped short of your potentialities as they put it, content to be a painter when you could be a creative artist.' They tell me I grabbed one of the critics by the lapels and tried to shake the words out of him ahead of next day's column..." His teeth were biting into his knuckle again short of the cut skin... "Sounded off with an alcoholic roar in a crowded room when I wanted only to drive him to creation."

"Look," said Kev, soaring his skater through the air on its paper plate. "Look at him go."

"That's one way to get movement. Now for the painting we came to see." He wolfed his raisin pie, washed it down with cold coffee, wiped his mouth with his hand, which he scrubbed across his jeans, and took claustrophobic strides from the basement huddle of pipes, past the *Weird in Art* and up the stairs by twos and threes from basement to second, along drafty plateaus of the past, the art that has been judged.

A clean square of wall stopped him; he touched the space where a picture had been temporarily removed. "Wouldn't I like to unwrap this sable brush, and fill the void with a painting beyond anything yet conceived."

Looking back at the wall space, he went on to the Loan Exhibit, through three rooms without a turn to his head until in the backmost room he stopped dead center. "Find it if you can. Without going near enough to read names, find my brother's picture."

"None of them look like his. I don't see his color vibrations, his spatial—" .

"You're right, none of them, but step closer to the third one, read the name."

Marsden Chandler, his signature in assured strokes. "But how can that be? It isn't remotely like him or anyone. It's a new statement. Someone has stood before a canvas in all experience, yet seeing for the first time."

Close to, the canvas was tracked with gobs, blops, spoon dips of paint like the kitchen mess of youngsters making candy, but I stepped back to prismatic planes, color translucent on color, that let the eye do its own creating, painting the canvas to lighted windows, the lighted windows here, deepening into the windows there, the lighted and the unlighted, five o'clock windows in-scaped for all time, trembling their panes to infinity.

"I don't like going against your considered opinion of your brother, but if he did this, he belongs to more than a successful school. He's great on his own."

"You saw the inception of this painting when you came down looking for my brother. You saw it in my room and passed right over it."

"But we were so deep in aesthetics I couldn't even tell you whether there was a canvas on your easel."

"Yet you looked through the stacked canvases where it was."

"You mean he stole your painting? If he did you can take it to the courts."

"Not this steal, I can't. Even now, I get the heaves over it, stand in knots at my easel, my brush hand shaking, nerves raw underneath my nails as if he had jabbed thorns into them. Too much of our creativity goes to hate. Damn him just for being. Sometimes I wake up thinking I can paint the universe, but then I know my brother is lifting his brush at the same time, and I can't paint free. Wherever he is, I feel him alongside, ready to reach out his brush and correct a line."

Click of nails against canvas shuddered the frameless picture on its wire. A guard scuttled out from the room behind, his "Don't touch, don't touch," aimed at Kevie.

As the guard kept watch on Kev's roam around a sculptured seal, Chandler raised his thumb, "If that paint were wet as it

looks, I'd smear it end to end of that canvas at what he did to me. I had put him in a rage by the very purity of my hate, the art love in it, as I tried to drive him on to greatness. I set up easels side by side as Dad had done in our nursery days, put fresh canvas before each of us, and as he lifted a facile brush, I said, 'Look into your canvas, stop painting *In Remembrance*, paint what you know now.' He stood for so long while I was laying paint on paint for these lighted windows hanging here, that I thought he was seeing first canvas. I thought so until he stymied my brush with his trick from grade school. He turned his virtuosity to painting my picture better than I could, copying my work in a brush flash, rhythms I'd studied out through the years until my work looked like a crude copy of his. I put mine away unfinished among the stacks you fingered through, and he brought his to the signed finish."

Chandler again raised his thumb to the canvas. "Here it hangs, mocking my brother and me in every facet, the two of us in one work of art like a spinning coin that merges to a complete image."

Shaking, he reached into his pocket for the present to his brother, lifted as if to hurl, unwrapped it to the red sable brush. "Here," he said to Kev, "You take it."

Jefferson Young

THE PRINCESS

The young man who approached the street intersection carried his square shoulders easily, beneath a wrinkled seersucker coat, but there was an air of weariness in the way he paused, near the curb, and gazed at the afternoon traffic. After a moment he drew a handkerchief from his pocket and made little dabbing motions at the bright beads of perspiration on his forehead. The weather was warm, too warm for mid-September, and he had grown tired of searching for a room. He wished, for one reckless moment, that he were not so particular about his living quarters: he had seen six rooms already, all except one of them adequate enough, but none of them, for one curious reason or another, to his liking.

He looked at his watch before he pulled from his coat pocket a *Rooms For Rent* list, checked it quickly, then turned about, a little on his heels, and headed for the address the advertisement bore.

Two blocks away he arrived, still patting lightly at his forehead, at a brick house, two-storied in the main building, with a low addition facing the street lengthwise. Two doors led into the addition, but it was the bell to the door of the main building, a large door painted white, that he chose to ring.

Moments passed before, from behind the door there came a faint voice. "Who is it?"

He stared squarely into the wooden panels, as if making to the door itself his answer. "I came to see the room you have for rent."

"Yes. Oh, yes." The voice came nearer now, but was muted still. "Just one moment."

He tapped the toe of his foot against the floor and began to hum the tune of a song whose title he did not remember. But

soon, above his own noise, he heard the jangling of keys. The door was opened then, cautiously, to the width of about three inches.

"Hello," he said. "I came to see . . ."

"Come on in."

But he held still, for a moment struck motionless by the disheveled but oddly handsome woman who stood before him, her hand on the doorknob, in a pose suggesting that she had been waiting hours for just his ring. In her auburn hair, not quite ready to begin to gray, she wore a small piece of rose feather, and he saw that her hair exactly became the high-boned, angular features of her face. She wore a pink blouse too tight, a long tweed skirt, and black shoes, scuffed and dipping on one side at their heels. But it was her eyes and mouth that were prominent: brown dreamy eyes, and beneath them a large, sensitive, mobile mouth, on which she had hastily put too much rouge.

"I'm Rosemary Peters," she said. "Come on in." He entered. She closed the door behind them and went on: "But my friends call me Princess. Sit down over there." She spoke in a rich commanding voice.

"I'm James Hokin," he said, sitting in the chair she indicated.

"Excuse me," Miss Peters said suddenly, "while I gargle some soda water. It's my voice, you know."

He looked about the large, rectangular room. The room held a baby grand piano, opened, as if recently used. On the mantel a little to James' right, above a wide fireplace with brass andirons, were two old blue vases of an elegant design. Between these, in a gold frame, stood a large picture of a young man and woman, both in extravagant costume, their arms about one another. In the middle of the room, facing James, was a couch heaped with old clothing: gold lamé evening gowns and gowns of rich old velvet—light blue, green, and red, the red one trimmed with white ermine. There were old furs too, moth-eaten now, shabby, and some brightly colored ostrich feathers.

James recognized the red velvet gown to be the same one the young woman wore in the photograph. He wanted to go over to

inspect the costume closely, but just now Miss Peters returned. She pushed aside two fur pieces and sat on the couch.

She studied him without speaking, looked at him too directly; he felt uncomfortable. But finally, as if she had at last settled some question known only to herself, she said:

"You wanted to see the room? How old are you?"

"Yes," he said. "Twenty-three."

"Have you ever been married?"

He blushed, could feel the warmth rising toward his ears. "No. Well, not exactly." He almost spoke wistfully. "I mean in reality, no."

Miss Peters sat very still. She appeared to be considering his remarks. Then, slowly, she turned her head to look toward the mantel. She let her gaze linger a long time on the picture. Her eyes brightened. When she spoke her voice was low, and in the dim quietness of the room it carried sadly.

"The picture there. That's me in costume for *The Student Prince*. On Broadway. Ten years ago. And that's my leading man with his arm around me. Michael Roland. Michael. A handsome man."

She looked down at the costumes beside her and fell silent for a time. Finally, her voice almost a whisper, she added: "He was the most handsome man I ever knew."

James felt that he should say something appropriate. He drew himself up. "It's a fine picture of both of you."

"He was handsome. I was beautiful." She claimed her beauty simply, as a fact, not bragging.

"And they raved about the performance," she went on, not looking up. "Our pictures in all the papers, week after week. And hundreds at the stage door waiting for me. And flowers. Eight or ten boxes in my dressing room every night. For over a year. And I would want Michael to come in to see them. But he was usually back with the dancing corps."

From the couch she lifted a blue satin hat with a white feather curving above its top. "I wore this hat in my big scene."

She looked vaguely about the room, then said, grimly: "From that to this."

"From that to this." She sat erect; clenched her fist; became excited. "Haggling with tenants! I can tell you, I've had some strange ones in this house. I had three girls in here, all of them nice respectable girls. Or at least I thought they were respectable. All three of them lived here a whole year. But one morning they all got out of bed and said I was overcharging.

"Overcharging!"

Her full mouth tightened. "Yes, and they went down and complained to those price people. Had me investigated. People running in and out asking all sorts of questions. And I had to get a lawyer. But that dim-witted rascal turned out to be just as crooked as those silly girls. They all tried to get me in court. But I was sick! Had diabetes. Dying with it! And nervous breakdowns. I went to bed having one nervous breakdown right after another, with all of my doors locked. I lay in bed a year and a half, letting in only a doctor and a friend of mine I could trust."

She banged her fist down on the arm of the couch. "And then lost the suit! Can you imagine it? All because of those outrageous girls. And I'd been kind to them, had tried to make them feel that this was their home. If they ever had homes!"

"Girls are funny," James said, and folded his hands across one leg. Already in his good-natured way, he was beginning to feel protective toward Miss Peters. "Girls sure are. Sometimes they win like that."

"They won, there's no doubt about that. Hands down! Can you imagine it? And I was dying all the time. Sick in bed! Having one nervous stroke after another. *Strokes!* I can tell you young man, I've been murdered by the people I've been kind to."

She abruptly ceased her tirade and settled back on the couch as if exhausted. Her head framed itself in the tattered folds of a gold-colored costume and her face paled so that it took on the appearance of some old painting James had once seen in a museum. When she spoke again her voice was deep, all but choking with emotion.

"Everybody was on stage when I wore this hat. Michael and myself together, upstage center, with all the others behind us. All

twenty-eight of the dancers. Sometimes Michael would smile back at them, over his shoulder. I wanted to marry him. Michael. More than anything in the world I wanted to marry him. Sometimes we'd go to supper, after the show. Somebody from the corps always went with us. I remember one in particular who stood out, named Edwin."

"It's certainly interesting to meet someone who's been in a big show," James said.

"Yes." A single tear went down her cheek. But she brushed it aside with a gallant air, and smiled. "But you came to see about the room, not to listen to all that."

"I'd like to see it."

"Come on this way."

She skipped a little, like a child, as she led the way to a small room beyond a library. The room contained a single bed, large chair and a chest of drawers. The bare floor looked unclean and faded green curtains hung crookedly at the small window.

"This is it, she said proudly. "Comfortable, innerspring mattress on the bed, and there's the bath adjoining."

He went into the room as if to begin a close inspection.

"My dressing room was about this size," she said, behind him. "Maybe larger. With a large mirror on the wall. I could see myself full-length in it. See how the costumes fit, you know. Sometimes, when we weren't on, Michael would come back with me. We'd chat. And all the time be listening to the music with one ear. Once Michael kissed me back there. But he spent most of his time with Edwin and the others."

She looked about the room as if rearranging it, making it again into the plain room she had for rent. "Do you like it?"

"I don't know," he said. The room was not as well furnished as any he had seen all day. It would not be comfortable. And yet . . .

"How much did you say the rent was?"

"Fifty. Fifty dollars a month. And everything's furnished."

"Is it quiet here? I like it to be quiet."

"Yes, it's quiet. But do you know what that silly girl who

lived in here said in court? Said I kept her awake at night. Walking and singing. Can you imagine a hair-brained idiot saying that? It's beyond me. This house is always a little like the grave."

She paused, as if expecting him to make some comment. But he continued to gaze about the room, not speaking. She folded her hands before her.

"You'll take it, won't you?"

"I don't know. The rent's a little more than I wanted to pay."

She put a finger to her cheek and stood pondering, her eyes on the floor, as if she might be turning figures over in her head. After a little time she looked at him. "Well, I think the room's worth fifty. But if it's more than you could pay.... How does forty a month sound?"

"That's a little more than...."

"Oh," she broke in. That look as if turning things about in her head came to her face again. A sudden feeling of pity welled inside him, making him want to go to her. But she had turned, hiding her face. When she started slowly back toward the livingroom he followed her.

She sat on the couch, tense, erect, her feet together. "I suppose that... that I could let you have it for thirty-five. Is that too much?"

Now for the first time, he saw the small wrinkles, like the thin veins of a leaf, about her mouth. And for a little moment he believed he saw her lips quiver. She looked at him steadily, her eyes, large now, searching his face, pleading. "You'll take it, won't you?"

"Yes," he said quickly. "Yes, I'll take it. I'd like to rent it."

It took several seconds for his words to register completely with her. Then her face brightened. "Fine. That's fine!"

He paid her in advance, three crisp ten dollar bills and a crumpled five dollar note. Then, preparing to leave, he asked: "When may I move in, Miss Peters?"

"Anytime. Anytime you'd like to." She stood. The smile she gave him brought to her face something of the beauty and youth that he had noticed in the photograph. "But please don't call me

Miss Peters," she said. "Call me the Princess. Just call me the Princess!"

Outside, James moved quickly along the sunlit street. He would move into the room that night. But for the moment he had to hurry on downtown. In thirty minutes he was due at the studio for his dancing lesson.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE LITTLE REVIEW ANTHOLOGY. Edited by Margaret Anderson. Hermitage. 1953.

For me and my generation, born too late to know the *Little Review* as a periodical (and most of us not having had access to a complete file), this big (382 pp.) book is easily the next best thing. Indeed, Miss Anderson suggests that it is better than that, for "it is only by condensing the *Little Review* to its quintessence that one can see how good it was."

And incidentally, one might add, just how good an editor Miss Anderson really is: because, let there be no mistake about it, this *Anthology* is a shrewd job of editing. The problem, Miss Anderson writes in her preface, was to reduce fifteen years of a magazine's life to 135,000 words. She has solved it by some really ruthless cutting, including only what she believes to be the most interesting sections of the best contributions; as might be expected, there is very little dross left. Further, Miss Anderson has interpolated her italicized comments before almost every selection. The net result is a sort of essay with illustrations, a biography which catches not only the more permanent accomplishments of the magazine but a good deal of its spirit as well.

The *Little Review* was founded because of Miss Anderson's conviction that "people who make Art are more interesting than those who don't; that they have a special illumination about life..." This attitude, of course, is fairly commonplace among many of the bright-eyed hangers-on who start a new review (with high hopes of setting new literary fashions) and close shop a week later (with recriminations against this or that movement—or, as is more likely, the vast public indifference which has smothered them). I do not say this in scorn, since no matter how prosperous the times generally, they never seem propitious for the survival of the non-commercial magazine; I mention this high mortality rate rather to point up the fact that fifteen years continued publication requires stamina. Editing and publishing a literary mag-

azine is ultimately as much an act of faith as anything should ever be, and the mere glamour never lasts long. It takes courage and confidence in one's vision. And a tremendous amount of good will.

To have to do the job alone is grim business, and it is fortunate that Miss Anderson had two uniquely-qualified collaborators; I doubt if three individuals, by no means in perpetual agreement, ever made a more *complementary* team:

I know now the sources of this "goodness" [writes Miss Anderson]. Much of it came from Ezra Pound and his genius for discovering and aiding the important artists of our time; much of it came from my own flair for distinguishing between the "interesting" and "uninteresting"; but most of it came from Jane Heap and her possession of that special illumination.

By team, I mean, for instance, that Pound was at his best as a kind of advance scout, following his own magnificent bent for sniffing out and spotting genius, then acting as impresario for his discoveries; in short, when his energies were freed from the mechanical drudgery of publishing—as they were not in the case of *The Exile*—to concentrate solely on the job that he, more than anyone else of our time, appears to have been equipped to do.

On the other hand, I hope I may be forgiven for not sharing Miss Anderson's enthusiasm for Jane Heap. I am not in a position to assess Miss Heap's capacities as an editor, but I am profoundly distrustful of anyone who can write:

Tagore is coming back to America to lecture. Go, if you have never seen that slight presence with features drawn of air—with eyes that seem never to have looked out—and let him put that white spell of peace on your complex futility.

However, Miss Anderson has described the acquisition of Jane Heap for the staff as "the most interesting thing that ever happened to the magazine;" my point is that if Miss Heap was a stimulant or encouragement to Miss Anderson, we can afford to overlook any amount of bad writing on her part. And she did have a special talent I shall mention later.

Above the mere fact of its publication, we should be grateful to Miss Anderson and the *Anthology* for putting into print again

a number of scarce items; among those of particular interest, for one reason or another, are "Eeldrop and Applexplex," a fiction by T. S. Eliot in the manner of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*; "Candleman's Spring Mate," one of Wyndham Lewis's best two or three short stories; *Women and Men*, F. M. Ford's rarest book (Miss Anderson wisely reprints only part of section IV, and section V); the Fenollosa-Pound "Chinese Written Character," available only in a limited paper-back edition; and Carnevali's "Tales of a Hurried Man." Also included are excerpts from the the *Little Review*'s special numbers—that is, those devoted to one topic: W. H. Hudson, H. James, de Gourmont, Brancusi, contemporary French verse—which became paradigms for the literary magazines that followed. (I should probably add that most of the criticism in the *Anthology* is, as might be expected, expository, impressionistic and crude; the appreciations are better.)

The *Little Review* possessed, I would judge, a good deal more positive personality than the majority of little magazines, particularly in our own decorous times. In the letter column, for instance, Jane Heap was apparently willing to take on all dissenters, nor was there any of this clubby business, sometimes found in the more puerile little magazine—the kind that proudly displays *all* communications—of "Thanks so much for writing, we wish every reader was as articulate as you!" On the contrary, Miss Heap bluntly told protestants to clear out; if they remained persistent she would indicate, not too delicately, that she and they simply did not live on the same world—how *could* they expect to understand the *Little Review*?

There is an undeniable silliness in such an attitude (which one is glad Miss Anderson did not edit out), a cock-eyed independence which we, in our era of super weapons and international tensions, feel we cannot afford,¹ but the wonderful thing about the *Little*

¹The right contrast for the *Little Review Anthology*, as well as what I shall be saying about literary magazines generally, is perhaps *The New Partisan Reader* (Harcourt, Brace, 1953), a distinguished volume which displays to advantage PR's effort, as Mr. Trilling puts it, "to organize a new union between our political ideas and our imaginations." This emphasis on political thought, producing a not-unjustifiable shrillness, results in an extra-literary liveliness rare in the strictly literary field.

Review is one's conviction that its editors *enjoyed their work!* One knows that the days when they were tried and fined for publishing *Ulysses* must have seemed a sorry reward for devotion, but even then they didn't display any hang-dog determination to save the world. The *Little Review* was a magazine that published *Art for Art's sake*, and that was all. And, in this case, enough.

The *Little Review* seems to me to have had purpose, honesty, and best of all, gaiety and an almost incredible innocence. Consider Pound, for instance, exclaiming wonderingly over the fact that a blockhead won't believe you think he's a blockhead, even though you tell him so; or Pound, again, pointing out that either the *Little Review* must try to pay at least part of his keep or he'll be forced to abandon it in favor of lucrative hack work. Ezra, incidentally, seems to have been a pretty steady irritant to many people, none more than Jane Heap, but as she indicates, "We have let Pound be our foreign editor in the only way we see it. We have let him be as foreign as he likes: foreign to taste, foreign to courtesy, foreign to our standards of Art." In short, they let Pound do his own job in his own way, and just how triumphantly time has vindicated him is clear to us now.

The literary paper is, of course, as much a product of its times as the slick magazine, though in a different perspective. In a period of great experiment and productivity, when the old hegemony is finally breaking up (as in the day of the *Little Review*), the literary magazine can profitably devote itself to creative material, which is *not* the same thing as making or dominating its epoch; but when the innovation slacks off, there should follow a period of retrospect, of critical consolidation of new values. Hence the "new" critical emphasis and the contemporary critical quarterly—which are exactly proper for our time. (It is not that there is no experimentation today, but that it is mostly so wretched.) Only in this way can we be ready for a new advance.

We know now how vital a role the independent magazine fulfills in a healthy society of letters; it must stimulate, encourage, and nurture (not just spiritually, if more is possible) the writer while telling a limited public—the only public which matters, the editors would say—how to read his work. The *Little Review* did

superbly what needed to be done, and for that we cannot give it too high praise. In 1929, in its last issue, Ford Madox Ford wrote,

I mean that one had the feeling that, thanks to you, if one did not hit on something real to write one might afford that luxury that is for the writer at once the Rolls Royce and the month on the boardwalks of Atlantic City—the luxury of finding publication for unprofitable work.

Only a writer who has struggled to keep alive his artistic integrity in Balfour's England—or Eisenhower's America—can truly know how important and necessary that feeling is.

THOMAS H. CARTER

THE ENGLISH NOVEL: FORM AND FUNCTION. By *Dorothy Van Ghent*. Rinehart. 1953.

To an age which seeks its diversion and its self-criticism (the latter often unintentionally) mainly through the movies and television, "literature" has largely come to mean prose fiction, primarily the novel. And for an age whose makers of literature delight in paradox there is perhaps a wry one in the thought that our televised and cineramic enlightenment must be sought in the dark. At any rate, the novel is certainly the most popular form of literature today, and publishing figures do not indicate its imminent decline. But if most of us read novels, few of us *reread* them unless we are teachers or critics—or novelists. Yet Mrs. Van Ghent's series of studies of eighteen "classical" novels is designed for the general reader as "an accompaniment to a rereading" of them and as "exercises in curiosity . . . to see what these novels look like when opened up side by side in a perspective of three centuries" and as individual, even timeless, works of art.

Mrs. Van Ghent's "exercises in curiosity" consists of eighteen critical essays, skillfully integrated but each devoted to a single one of the following novels: *Don Quixote* (the only one not English) *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Moll Flanders*, *Clarissa Harlowe*, *Tom Jones*, *Tristram Shandy*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Heart of Midlo-*

thian, *Great Expectations*, *Vanity Fair*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Adam Bede*, *The Egoist*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *The Potrait of a Lady*, *Lord Jim*, *Sons and Lovers*, and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Two convictions, says Mrs. Van Ghent, motivate her discussions: that a novel's primary interest is the illumination it casts upon life, immediately here and now; and that this illumination is cast upon life only insofar as the novel is a coherent work of art. She does not lose sight of these convictions, and her essays provide some new insights and different approaches to the novels which are challenging stimuli to re-reading them.

In trying to understand more clearly each novel as a work of art, Mrs. Van Ghent necessarily pays much attention to the techniques of fiction, and she is particularly concerned to find and reveal some principle of structure, some "single dominant procedure" which gives the novel a unique power. For example, she points out in *Don Quixote* the special procedures of parody and paradox, in *The Pilgrim's Progress* those of symbolism and allegory, in *Clarissa Harlowe* the behavior of myth, in *Pride and Prejudice* the activities of style. This method of approach is perhaps more characteristic of the first essays in the volume than of those later ones dealing with more recent works. But throughout she never forgets that the real stuff of fiction is "human relationships in which are shown the directions of men's souls." And she notes significantly that "the procedure of the novel is to individualize," to formulate its collective values by inference from individual concrete things.

To attempt to analyze and comment on eighteen, separate critical essays is manifestly beyond the scope of a periodical review, but by noting the procedures and conclusions of a few representative pieces some idea can be gained of the nature of Mrs. Van Ghent's method and opinions. She begins with *Don Quixote*, justifying its inclusion in a study of otherwise English novels by recalling Lionel Trilling's point that

In any genre it may happen that the first great example contains the whole potentiality of the genre. It has been said that all philosophy is a footnote to Plato. It can be said that all prose fiction is a variation on the theme of *Don Quixote*.

Eighteenth century English novelists (Fielding, Sterne, even Jane

Austen) certainly evidence an awareness of Cervantes' model, and even in the work of the later novelists—Conrad, James, and Joyce, for example—there are “generic concerns” which were felt by Cervantes.

Perhaps the most helpful idea for understanding *Don Quixote*, says Mrs. Van Ghent, is that of a structure based on “a system of contrasts.” She finds these contrasts in profusion, from the most general (narrative, design, settings) down to those between individual motifs (details of action, types of nouns), and throughout those which are both the means and the results of Cervantes' concept of paradox and parody. It should be said here that Mrs. Van Ghent's ideas are by no means always original, nor does she claim that they are. Here, as elsewhere in the volume, she scrupulously acknowledges her indebtedness to other commentators, and such acknowledgement indicates not only her critical honesty but her extensive reading and judicious assimilation of the critiques of others, from Coleridge to V. S. Pritchett and Mark Shorer.

In *Moll Flanders* Mrs. Van Ghent distinguishes nicely between two kinds of realism, noting that the entire novel is oriented toward “what we call ‘facts’—specifically toward those facts which are events and objects that have spatial-temporal determination.” Yet these tangible, material objects with which Moll is so much concerned are not at all “vivid in texture.” It is the counting, measuring, pricing, and evaluating of things in terms of wealth and social status which is important in Moll's world, not the sensuous life and the concrete experience of things having individual texture. This relative unimportance of the sensuous life in Moll's world is astonishing in the light of Moll's own lusty nature. But Mrs. Van Ghent makes her point.

The antithesis of Moll Flanders, as heroine, which Mrs. Van Ghent finds in Clarissa Harlowe, and the development of it in discussing Richardson's novel furnish a good example of the apt transitions and skillful integration which link these eighteen critiques. Just as the chief idiosyncrasy of Moll's world is to externalize life and to convert experiences into cash or measurable, material quantities, that of Clarissa Harlowe's is the reverse: to convert the external forms of life into subjective quality and

spiritual value. Perhaps the core of Mrs. Van Ghent's examination of *Clarissa Harlowe* is her view of the novel as myth, but myth in several different aspects, of which three are prominent: the Puritan religious myth (in *Clarissa* "a daemonic view of life"), the myth of social caste or class ("a parable on the antithesis of the aristocratic and middleclass codes"), and the sexual myth ("she keeps her cake while eating it"). *Clarissa*, in remaining both virtuous and desirable, thereby qualifies as something of a middle-class goddess of love.

Tom Jones Mrs. Van Ghent considers structurally characterized, like *Don Quixote*, by a systematic organization of contrasts, and she sees it primarily as a study in the function of plot, in which one attitude and way of life is played off against another, with constant contrasts of human nature, character and scene relationships, and even verbal relationships.

Verbal manipulation and "the artistic mastery of limited materials" are major concerns in the discussion of *Pride and Prejudice*. With respect to the former, Mrs. Van Ghent shows how, in the novel's opening chapter, Jane Austen skillfully sets up, by the use of single words ("fortune," "property," "possession," "business" versus "feelings," "love," "marriage"), the impulsion of economic interest against non-utilitarian interests. Thus the very language of *Pride and Prejudice* reflects its central conflict, that between "a decorous convention of love" and "a savage economic compulsion." Mrs. Van Ghent finds, too, in Jane Austen's equating of the moral life with delicacy and integrity of feeling—and in the person of Elizabeth, with intelligence—a kinship between Jane Austen and Henry James, perhaps the closest (in this conception of the moral life) in the tradition of the English novel.

Even stranger literary bed-fellows are proposed in Mrs. Van Ghent's suggestion that Henry James and Charles Dickens are concerned, in *The Portrait of a Lady* and *Great Expectations*, with the same "sin" of the tendency to regard people as mere lifeless instruments. This disclosure of a similar concern, however, is not central to Mrs. Van Ghent's discussion of either novel. She appears most interested, in *Great Expectations*, in the many conversations which are really "rapt soliloquies." These "soliloquizing

characters" and their strange language (concocted for the "solitariness of the soul") constitute for Mrs. Van Ghent one of the two most personal aspects of Dickens' technique. The other is "the abruptness of his tempo." as for James, Mrs. Van Ghent sees *The Portrait of a Lady* as a study in "the creation of a self," the demonstration at the top levels of material opportunity of the tension between circumstances and volition, "necessity" and "freedom." *The Portrait* is not a tragedy, like *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, but it is as deeply informed with the tragic view of life, "that tragic view of life whose essence is contained in the words, 'He who loses his life shall find it'."

In reviewing a volume of such disparate yet integrated studies, the temptation to continue indefinitely recalling such random observations as these already mentioned is hard to resist. But some must be left for the reader himself. And Mrs. Van Ghent supplies an abundance. One thinks of such of her tantalizing descriptive phrases as "the method of the image" (*Vanity Fair*), "the daemonic archetype" (*Wuthering Heights*), "the drift toward death" (*Sons and Lovers*). Or her characterization of Tess Durbeyfield's dilemma as "that of morally individualizing consciousness in its earthy mixture." Or of her pin-pointing of Stein's answer, in *Lord Jim*, to the question of "how to be": "In the destructive element immerse."

As in any critical work, there are judgments in Mrs. Van Ghent's book which readers may not accept. There are, too, occasional cloudy and involved, or pompous and over-esoteric, flights of phraseology. But the volume is generally free of the seemingly willful obscurity and specialized coterie jargon which discourage many a "general reader" from attempting contemporary critical works. Mrs. Van Ghent's studies make the reader want to reread the novels she discusses, and her insights give him much that will sharpen and deepen that rereading.

MARVIN B. PERRY, JR.

I: SIX NONLECTURES. By *e. e. cummings*. Harvard. 1953.

E. E. Cummings opened the Charles Eliot Norton lectures at Harvard by announcing that since lecturing was teaching, and a

teacher was a person who knows, he had no intention of posing as a lecturer, for he did not know, but was there to learn. Since he could not tell what he knew, he would tell who he was.

Cummings begins by asserting that he is two people: his parents' son and then "...at a wholly mysterious moment which signifies self-discovery, I became my writing." *Six nonlectures* is an exploration of "the vanished world of my parents' son," of that lengthened moment Cummings calls self-discovery, and of his stance as a writer.

Cummings was born "at home . . . long, long ago; before time was space and Oedipus was a complex and religion was the opiate of the people." A home—with its implications of warmth, sincerity, and love. His boyhood was filled with myths, Dickens, *Robinson Crusoe*, the *Bible*, with no "uncomic nonbooks to insult the virginal imagination." In this world he discovered, among other things, "that mystery who is Nature . . . Her illimitable being of her beyond imagining imagination." He murmurs spring and beauty and love in a long ecstatic sigh.

This was the sheltered world of Harvard in the Golden Age, when such figures as Charles Eliot Norton, Taussig the economist, and the philosopher Josiah Royce lent a never-to-be-forgotten atmosphere to the Cambridge world. "I may be said to owe my existence to Professor [William] James, who introduced my father to my mother." Cummings "vanished world" was a charming, engaging world—a pleasant, well-ordered, interesting one. It was a world of anecdotes about Taussig's spaniel Hamlet and Royce's absent-mindedness—a world of "a true father and a true mother and a home which the truth of their love made joyous."

Cummings thanks Harvard for his first taste of freedom and true friendship. It was here he entered upon the path which eventually led to his self-discovery as an individual. Here he quickened to the mysteries of nature, individuality, and love. And it was at Harvard that he began his lifelong recoil from "Security": "something negative, undead, suspicious and suspecting . . ." Cummings began to wonder about definitions of terms like truth (not "televisionary"), goodness (not "not hurting people"), and beauty (not "shoppe").

Boston gave Cummings a glimpse at another, more chaotic world. New York provided him with "a phenomenon and a miracle . . . a phallic female phantasm clothed in thunderous anonymity and adorned with colossally floating spiderwebs of traffic; a stark, irresistably stupendous newness, mercifully harboring among its pitilessly premeditated spontaneities immemorial faces and nations . . ." In Paris Cummings gained a new concept of humanity, discovering the miracle that is Man. Here life came into focus for him; dualities were reconciled. "Everywhere I sensed a miraculous presence—of living human beings."

E. E. Cummings was no longer his parents' son . . . he was now a writer and to know the man now was to know his work. (Calling his verbal self-portrait one half of the whole, Cummings points out that he is not discussing his work as a painter.) Cummings begins expounding his stance as a writer by pointing out that he believes, first and last, in the individual. The individual is one who feels as opposed to one who knows or thinks.

In these lectures, the last three of the six, Cummings' method of communication is his previous writings interspersed with his comments on them. At the end of each of the six lectures Cummings has placed several poems from other writers, including works by Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Donne, Burns, Shelley, and Keats. Thus *six nonlectures* might accurately be described as anthology, essay, and autobiography.

"If a poet is anybody," says Cummings, "he is somebody to whom things made matter very little—somebody who is obsessed by Making . . ." The poet (or artist or individual) has an imagination that asserts itself over reality. The artist imposes *his* terms on life, and is concerned with the process of being and becoming. The individual is "... something incredibly more distant than any sun; something more unimaginably huge than the most prodigious of all universes." He has the capacity for feeling: "... to feel something is to be alive. 'War' and 'peace' are not alive: far from it. 'Peace' is the inefficiency of science. 'War' is the science of inefficiency. And science is knowing and knowing is measuring. Art is a mystery. A mystery is something immeasurable. Nothing meas-

urable can be alive." "Every artist's strictly illimitable country is himself."

The individual is faced with the dual necessity of asserting himself and transcending himself. The artist is the prime example of the individual. Through self-assertion he is a Man; as a growing self-transcending being he is a Failure . . . in the sense that his goal can never be success. He must painfully strip off his skin of temporality, his existence in time and place, and must consecrate himself on the altar of the ultimate. He must "proceed: not succeed." Success or failure are irrelevancies; the only reality is the feeling self and there is no goal other than the agony of growth, conceivable only in terms of the individual. Yet the *divinum mysterium* of Man is love, the mystery of mysteries. The lover is "a profoundly alive and supremely human being," allied to mankind even in his severance from society.

As an example of a system annihilating the individual, Cummings points to the Soviet perversion of communism. Here is a regime of sterile omnipotence, a "reasoned enormity," effecting "the salvation of all through the assassination of each." The world of materialistic capitalism has no immunity from Cummings' condemnation: "a world so blurred that its inhabitants are one another." "The world of salesmanship . . ."

Who, then, is E. E. Cummings as a writer? "... a feeling illimitable individual; whose only happiness is to transcend himself, whose every agony is to grow." He is a man in love with freedom and nature and humanity . . . and love.

If criticism is to be leveled at *six nonlectures*, it must be at the result of the very nature of Cummings' effort. He is victimized by his own agility with words, which too often borders on the glib, the superficially witty, or the precious, e.g., "superskyscraper-deluxe," "inhuman unbeings," "supermechanized submorons." This undoubtedly stems from the fact that the book is a collection of lectures. Having been privileged to hear Cummings deliver the Charles Eliot Norton lectures at Harvard, I feel that while his over-adroit phrases are entertaining and appealing to a lecture audience, they detract from the reader's appreciation of what is meant as a serious self-analysis, making it, in Cummings' phrase,

"an aesthetic striptease." The reader's attention is diverted from what he is saying to how he is saying it.

But to really criticize *six nonlectures* would be simply to criticize E. E. Cummings, the man, the individual, and the artist. I, for one, have no wish to do this. Perhaps it will suffice to quote from Rilke on criticism with Cummings' comment on the pasasge.

" 'Works of art are of an infinite loneliness and with nothing to be so little reached as with criticism. Only love can grasp and hold and fairly judge them.' "

In my proud and humble opinion, those two sentences are worth all the soi-disant criticism of the arts which has ever existed or will ever exist."

EDWARD M. HOOD

DREAM AND RESPONSIBILITY. By *Peter Viereck*. University Press of Washington, D. C. 1953.

Thomas Babington Macaulay, the most eminent historian, poet, and critic of a century ago, once stated that the best critics are those who are somewhere between the mob and the artist, without the fickleness of the mob or the specialized devotion of the artist. The creative faculty and the critical faculty, he held further, cannot exist together in their highest perfection. If this be true, Peter Viereck, the contemporary historian, poet, and critic, belongs, as Macaulay did not, rather to the poets than to the critics. The four essays which make up *Dream and Responsibility: Four Test Cases of the Tension Between Poetry and Society* have previously appeared, in part, in various periodicals. That they should be here collected is perhaps unfortunate, for a number of misprints, hurried witticisms, and insensitive allusions have thus been put into lasting form. "A magazine is certainly a delightful invention for a very idle or a very busy man," wrote Macaulay; "he may be as superficial, as inconsistent, and as careless as he chooses." True, but the moment a critic re-publishes he "challenges a comparison with all the most symmetrical and polished of human compositions." As a

critic Mr. Viereck does not stand the comparison very well, and the present collection seems intended to bring together in one binding various statements of his "ethics-dedicated 'revolt against revolt'" and not to undertake in the little book's sixty-four pages the regular development of a central thesis.

The "revolt against revolt" is ascribed on the jacket not to Mr. Viereck alone but to "thousands of the more serious college students of America," who "consider him *their* special poet." Part of this attraction for college students is no doubt his personal involvement in the emotional commitment to the issues he discusses, esteem for specialized devotion being one of the engaging characteristics of youth. Such devotion, however, while prolific of opinion is sterile to true criticism: the voice becomes high-pitched, the tone becomes shrill, epithets, sometimes clever but never dignified, rush to the tongue. Is this the language, one asks, that now gives currency to the beautiful, the good, and the true? In cult, moreover, as in any association of specialists, the language which performs the ordinary give-and-take of ideas has unique meaning for the initiated; assumptions do not need to be made explicit, the positions do not need to be defined—or defended. The reader who has not yet shared in any revolt against revolt will accordingly feel at a disadvantage in *Dream and Responsibility*, where conjectural assumptions frequently are contradictory and where generalizations regularly follow particulars without, so far as is evident, being caused by them. The four essays are therefore better suited as a handbook for devotees than as a contribution to general critical theory.

Something like a central thesis for the book emerges if we link the three quotations that figure prominently in the volume: "In dreams begins responsibility," "J'aime l'art comme pouvoir," and "Patriotism is not enough." Charged with the obligations of intellectual and spiritual noblesse, the poet must use his power to promote free individualism, that freedom which is both the type and the progenitor of political freedom. "Whatever expresses ethics, beauty, and love with genuine human individuality," says Mr. Viereck in what one wishes were the controlling idea for the whole volume, "is thereby a blow against tyrants (whether com-

munists, fascists, or domestic American thought-controllers)." Possibly some such idea was indeed in the author's mind when he assembled the various writings appearing here. If so, we shall assume that the already-published word exercised an unfortunate tyranny over him, for the essays go tediously into such matters as Ezra Pound's unworthiness for the Bollingen prize, Stefan George's proto- (though pseudo-) Naziism, and the number of poets who have mentioned steam engines.

Every schoolboy knows—or did once—Lord Macaulay's dictum that as civilization advances, poetry necessarily declines. Mr. Viereck, to judge from this book and his other writings, believes that as civilization declines, poetry must advance or all is lost. Anxious over the fate of a world in which totalitarian government is a possibility, he holds that "all human beings, including poets, who enjoy the privileges of a free society, ought to make their freedom-enjoying privileges be equaled by their freedom-defending duties (provided, always, that these duties are undertaken individually and voluntarily, not under state coercion or blind conformism)." He cites no instance of poetry's having served the forces of light in anything like the extent to which he believes the poetry of Ezra Pound and Stefan George has served the forces of darkness. But the poetry which will perform that service must, he says, prefer a difficult simplicity to an easy obscurity and must "return to the function of ethical responsibility and of communication of ideas and emotions." In the chapter called "Art versus Propaganda" Mr. Viereck draws a sharp distinction between legitimate responsibility and the attitude of a poet who has merely stopped being Irresponsible. And in that chapter appears the one memorable paragraph of the book, wherein is characterized freedom of spirit in words which, despite the intrusion of politics, point clearly to where, after all, poetry and freedom and responsibility can alone be said to exist.

NORMAN M. REHG, JR.

THE VOICES OF SILENCE. By André Malraux. Doubleday. 1953.

M. Malraux's latest work, *The Voices of Silence*, is lavishly and carefully illustrated, well printed, boxed like a gift of the Magi, full of promise and hints of its own immortality. But after having read it, one is left perplexed and dissatisfied. It is really ironic that the one-time associate secretary of the revolutionary Kuomintang, the soldier who fought with the Loyalists in the Spanish Civil War, and the author of *The Conquerors* and *Man's Hope* should come forth, after years of research and writing, with this incredible book. For M. Malraux is now clearly disillusioned in respect to modern man's efforts at secular salvation, and very distrustful of the values of contemporary civilization. His argument at times approaches the spirit of the "convert-from-the-Left," and, if taken seriously, becomes an exemplary statement of the position that past art is present politics. But to overemphasize this aspect of the work would be unjust, for the author is primarily concerned with sharing with us the fruit of his long meditations on the nature and meaning of art.

One cannot help first asking the question: for whom was this book written? Certainly not for the specialist, since there is little here which is genuinely original, either in scholarship or theory; most of the ideas will be commonplace to those at all familiar with critics like Roger Fry and Focillon. In fact, the specialist can only be disturbed by many of Malraux's sweeping generalizations and unqualified declamations; he will also object to the illustrations, which in not a single instance fail to distort the objects they portray, either because they show only details, because they fail to convey scale, or because they are the result of dramatic lighting and photography. Nor can a book which discourses at some length and with considerable erudition on Fayum portraits and the Gandhara style possibly be directed towards the enlightenment of a wide audience—even in France. One is left to conclude that M. Malraux is writing—in the best sense of the words—for a public of amateurs and dilettantes.

While the general thesis of the book is unacceptable, if not objectionable, to an American public, this does not mean that it is

worthless. Far from it. M. Malraux has a direct and powerful style (well conveyed by his translator, Stuart Gilbert) which commands attention and respect. What he lacks in originality he makes up for in force, and there are few pages of art criticism anywhere which are better expressed or more provocative than his little essays-within-an-essay on Gallic coins, Vermeer, El Greco, Manet, and the rest. In a word, while the book is often brilliant as analysis, it does not altogether come off as synthesis.

The root of the difficulty, and of our dissatisfaction, is in M. Malraux's extremely pessimistic (one might almost say Jansenist) view of contemporary man and western culture, and in his altogether negative view of history. Because such views are central in the author's thought, they must be understood before we can appreciate fully his philosophy of art. His view of modern man is clear:

Every day the incapacity of modern civilization for giving form to its spiritual values—even by way of Rome—becomes more apparent. Where once soared the cathedral, now rises ignominiously some pseudo-gothic edifice—or else the “modern” church, from which Christ is absent. There remains the Mass said on the mountain-top (whose insidious perils the Church was quick to realize) . . . This conflict exists wherever a machine-age culture has made good . . . Surely that little pseudo-gothic church on Broadway, hidden amongst the skyscrapers, is symbolic of the age! On the whole face of the globe the civilization that has conquered it has failed to build a temple or a tomb.

Or again:

Still too strong to be a slave, and not strong enough to remain the lord of creation, the individual man, while by no means willing to renounce his conquests, is ceasing to find in them his *raison d'être*; the devaluated individual of the five-year plans and the Tennessee Valley is losing nothing of his strength, but individualist art is losing its power to annex the world.

Do you get the *tone*? Ideologically speaking we are back with Ruskin. Evil days, exemplified by the machine, the skyscraper, and the TVA have come upon us, and Europe is faced with the awful alternatives of effecting her own “resurrection” or else ac-

cepting "the birth of an American culture, the triumph of Russian communism." It is apparent that in the eyes of the author, our mid-twentieth century is an age of devaluated men.

With this view of ourselves in mind, we can now turn to a closer examination of M. Malraux's view of art. In its origins, it is mystical: "All art, it seems, begins as a struggle to vanquish chaos with the aid of the abstract or the holy: never does it begin with the representation of the individual." Primitive art, whether a cave drawing at Altamira or a Benin bronze from Africa, is always an effort, through abstraction, to reduce nature and the unknown to human terms. For over three thousand years, from the first wall scratchings through the art of the Euphrates and the Nile to Greece, abstraction was the way of art. Then came Hellas, with its humanism and naturalism, in revolt against the enigmatic smile (still found in Buddhist art) and against the formal stylization of the Orient. Whence Apollo appeared, to glorify man rather than God, nature rather than the Absolute, history rather than eternity. "That ritual dance in which forms of Hellas made their first appearance is the dance of mankind joyously shaking off the yoke of destiny."

Greece was just a parenthesis, however, in the history of art, and with the decline of classicism, Appolo had several metamorphoses. In Western Europe he encountered Germanic barbarism and, (as traced through the art of numismatics) aristocratic naturalism became the poplar abstraction of Gallic and Transylvanian coins. In the Orient, the primacy of the gods over man was restored, and the humanistic narcissistic Apollo metamorphosed into another kind of abstraction: the Buddhist meditation of the Eternal. In early Roman and Byzantine Christianity classical realism became the abstraction of the mosaic and the icon: "To Christian eyes the life that the Romans saw as real was no *true* life. Thus if the true life was to be portrayed, it must break free from the real. The task of the Christian artist was to represent, not this world, but a world supernal . . ." In Romanesque and Gothic sculpture we find an opposition both to Byzantine stylization and the classical "mask"; for "every great Romanesque figure, as compared with its Byzantine next-of-kin, is *humanized*; though essentially religious, it

is no longer esoteric." Unlike the Byzantine, this art has a "soul"; it is "incarnate" art, the zenith of Western expression, in which God has become Jesus. This advance from the abstract to the particular is due to the late medieval humanization of God; in Malraux's words: "to restore life to art man did not need anatomy, but theology."

The counterpart of the Romanesque achievement is not reached in painting (excluding, of course, the art of the stained glass) until Giotto, the supreme innovator in his field, whose art Malraux describes as "a metamorphosis of Byzantine painting in terms of Gothic sculpture." Giotto proved that the Byzantine style was not the only one suitable to express the sacrosanct, abandoned the symbolic gesture of psychology, and originated the "composition" and "frame" of western painting. So far, the point is clear: all art before the Renaissance was a revolt against classical humanism as classical humanism had been a revolt against primitive abstraction. It was not until the Christian humanism of the Middle Ages that the harmony of the world, the artist, and the Absolute was achieved. Western art had finally not only fulfilled its function, it had reached its climax.

Within such a schema, Renaissance art, like that of Hellas, must play an inferior spiritual role. With the new spirit there came a change in the religious climate—religion was ceasing to mean Faith. "A Crucifixion by Giotto is a declaration of faith; Leonardo's *Last Supper*, sublime romance." The artist now set for his goals perfection, divine proportion, and ideal beauty (all imaginary); he was more concerned with visual harmony than spiritual truth. Not only had God become Jesus, but Nicholas of Cusa could even declare that "Christ is Perfect Man," words which close a whole cycle of Christendom. Indeed, for Malraux, the 16th century marked the beginning of a disintegration in which interest centered once more upon the things of this world, and by which the Absolute was replaced by an "accumulation of factual knowledge." In Holland, Protestant painting became *genre* and anecdotal, while Catholic Europe saw the triumph of the hollow theatricality of Baroque. Within a century, Value had dissolved into a plurality of values, man ceased the struggle to free himself from Time by

identifying himself with the cosmos, the Eternal was banished and replaced by its antithesis, History. By the 18th century it was apparent that Christianity had been superseded, but not so much by a new *ideology*, as by a new *fervor* and enthusiasm, directed towards Science and heroism rather than Faith and humility. This spirit reached its apex in the 19th century, when the "Revolutionary" was transformed into the "Man in Revolt," whose counterpart in art was the Byronic rebel, the artist as hero.

For Malraux, the real villain of the epic is "History," which he postulates as the antithesis of his "Eternal" and "Absolute." It is a History which reflects only the temporal affairs of this world, and which has no effect upon the creative activity of the artist:

Though the creative process has a place in history, it is independent of history. For, in so far as he is a creator, the artist does not belong to a social group already molded by a culture, but to a culture he is by way of building up. His creative faculty is not dominated by the age in which his lot is cast. . . .

What sort of French pastry is this? Surely the artist is as much a product of his culture as any other man, if he were not, he could not possibly play a creative role. The laws of heredity, in a cultural as well as a biological sense, still operate, and Malraux has still to refute the arguments posed by the sociology of knowledge. Yet even more strange than his denial of any significant temporal influences on art, and his notion that creation implies a break rather than a link with the past, are the diffuse and startling glimpses he occasionally reveals of his notion of history itself. "What, for example," he asks, "do Greece, Rome, and the Middle Ages conjure up in our mind save statues, edifices, and poetry?" Can this sort of question be serious? Or his assertion that "the Time of art is not the same as the Time of history," and that "history aims merely at transposing destiny onto the plane of consciousness, [while] art transmutes it into freedom?" Some of us would argue that history is always freedom, and that by denying it to the artist M. Malraux chains him completely to blindness and destiny. This sort of thing is unfortunate, for "Time," "History," and "Man," are concepts of supreme relevance to the philosophy

of art, and the quality of Malraux's definitions throws doubt on the values of his thesis as a whole.

He argues further that it was out of disintegration that modern art arose. The abandonment of the Absolute which began in the Renaissance had as its inevitable consequence the separation of art and society. For, in order to live, the artist must have an absolute, even if it is a personal one: the tragedy of modern society is that our absolutes have become relative. Modern art, which emerged in the 19th century, developed in a climate of cultural collapse. In France, the bourgeoisie had rejected the Revolution and Napoleon, and with these heroism. The artist, for the first time unable to share the values of the ruling class, became a cultist or a solitary, who addressed himself only to his own small circle. He was in revolt against a culture which had rejected the Absolute. Since his whole function as an artist was creation, was to overcome the world and the limits of history, he was forced to acquire his own absolute.

Simultaneous with the dichotomy which developed between the artist and society within the culture, changes were also being imposed from without. For art, the 19th century was the age of exploration and discovery, when new worlds were opened up. The photograph, which climaxed Jesuit art, completed the search for realism which had begun with the Renaissance. Even more significant was the resurgence of primitive art (which played the same role after Cézanne as antique art in the Renaissance), beginning with the architectural discoveries in Greece and the Near East, but continuing its inevitable progression from ancient primitives to modern primitives. Primitive art, along with the other sources of modern expression (the art of savages, children, and the insane) questioned not only the western tradition in art, but all western values, even man himself. Above all, they questioned our traditional optimism, and Malraux, like his own modern European, has a concept of man as devastated as the bombed cities of the West. For, as he surveys our culture, he concludes that we are having a renaissance—of fatalism.

The introduction of photography, along with our awareness of primitive art, has brought about a situation hitherto unknown

in western civilization—the triumph of style over function and meaning. It is on the basis of style that we have come to accent not only the art of other cultures, but even mutilated art and the fragment; the integrity of the work is no longer our concern. For example, ancient art has come to us colorless and in pieces, yet its very imperfections compose a style we admire. Moreover, many museum pieces we now regard as works of art were never conceived as such by their creators; they have lost their integrity of function, and should we suddenly feel about them as did their creators, we would remove them from our museums. We have even rejected the classical notion of beauty as an object to be *attained*, in favor of the view that beauty is something to be *created*.

The result has been the triumph of style over function and integrity which in our day has led to a new concept of art. "Modern art," says Malraux, "... is the annexation of forms by means of an inner pattern or schema, which may or may not take the shape of objects; but of which, in any case, figures and objects are no more than the expression..." Thus, no longer created to express religious truth, as in the Middle Ages, or ideal beauty, as in the Renaissance, art is reduced to an expression of style—insofar as it has a cosmopolitan language—and relative, personal, values—insofar as it has an absolute. Art is no longer at home in either the cathedral or the traditional museum of masterpieces, instead we have a Museum without Walls, limited only by the human imagination and the technical possibilities of the photograph. Here, art is subject only to the eye, it is no longer concerned with the "sublime," the transcendental," or the "beautiful"—we can enjoy art without implicating our souls.

But such an art, by its very nature, is interrogatory and destructive. By reducing everything to style, it questions the *value* of the world of appearances. "Our style is based on the conviction that the only world that matters is other than the world of appearances, which it does not so much express as parallel." Like Byzantine art, it has no "soul." Modern pictures are like icons; not ornaments, but sacred objects; not gods, but absolute. "Modern art is not a religion, but a faith. Not a sacrament, but the negation of the tainted world."

What is the way out of this dilemma? M. Malraux believes that the only solution is cultural re-integration: society and the artist must turn once again to the pursuit of the Absolute. In modern society, art has betrayed its cultural function, because it destroys rather than creates. The key to this position lies in Malraux's view of culture. For him, the true function of culture is to "perpetuate, enrich, or transform"—*but without impairing*—the ideal concept of man "*sponsored by those building it up.*" His arid view of history is coherent with his religious orthodoxy and his view that culture is the exclusive vehicle of the high intellectual tradition. For an American, Malraux flies in the face of all experience when he proclaims that "culture is the heritage of the *quality* of the world." For what he is saying is that our *art* is wrong because our *culture* is wrong; and our culture is wrong because it has lost its medieval (and Catholic) Christian Absolute—its "principle of unity." We are lost in the disintegrating of society of a mass culture of the "TVA and the Five Year Plans!"

Is it unreasonable at this point to ask M. Malraux his own question: can culture exist on such terms? To assign the whole creative world to the artist, to make him the exclusive guardian of the spirit is to exalt one man and to degrade all others—even in so ideal a setting as his historically questionable "unified" medieval culture. This is precisely what culture is *not*—it is rather the total effort and achievement of a society—the tabloid as well as the monograph on Cimabue, the typewriter as well as the Mona Lisa. The great monuments of our own way of life—our cities, our schools and productions, our leisure and our freedom—testify to a concept of culture which has little to do with painting or sculpture, but which gives testimony as strong as the Sistine Chapel or the Foolish Virgins of Srausburg to the creative dignity and spiritual aspirations of man. We must dissent because experience tells us that we cannot combat the world by ignoring or renouncing it. To use Malraux's favorite sort of language, the world must be taken by assault and subjected to our will, for this is the only way we shall ever assert the divine intimations within us. Man is not wrong because only God is right; man is right because he is the only instrument God has to operate in History.

It is the American faith that cultures are created by men, and therefore subject to human intelligence and will. To accept the notion that our humanity is simply a reflection of M. Malraux's Absolute, and that that Absolute cannot exist in a culture rooted in this world, is to bow to a destiny we cannot accept as man's fate.

The Voices of Silence is surely *not* one of the "really great books of our time." It is a profoundly significant book, but in a way quite different from the intention of the author. In terms of our own cultural experience, it becomes a surrender to defeatism and melancholy, to the fatalism which is reflected more and more in contemporary French thought. Where is the faith and confidence of Valéry, Gide, and Claudel, and that restlessness, their great gift, which led to such profound insights into the creative life? Unlike their legacy, this book is a monument, not to the dignity of contemporary man, but, with the works of Sartre, to the spiritual resignation and abdication of France. It is one of the most "dated" serious works to be presented in recent years, and surely its interest for the future will lie more in its reflection of the present than in its discourse on the past. In spite of his often powerful, moving, and persuasive language, Malraux gives us few insights into the meaning of art, although he does tell us much about himself. Like Saint Joan, he seeks his inspiration in voices; but unlike hers, his are the voices of silence, and despair.

HARVEY BUCHANAN

CONTRIBUTORS

HARVEY BUCHANAN studied in Italy for two years with Benedetto Croce and is now teaching at Case Institute in Chicago.

ROY CAMPBELL has just completed a lecture tour of the United States.

THOMAS H. CARTER has appeared in *Shenandoah* before.

EMILIE GLEN has appeared in such magazines as *American Mercury*, *New Mexico Quarterly*, and *Points*. She is now working on a novel.

EDWARD M. HOOD is a member of the *Shenandoah* Staff.

DAVID HORNE, who works part time for the Yale Press, has published a biography of George Peele and is working on a biography of Edward Alleyn.

GAVIN HYDE, 23, is a Yeoman Third Class in the United States Navy.

RUSSELL KIRK is the author of *The Conservative Mind*. His new book, *St. Andrews*, was recently published in London.

ARCHIBALD MACLEISH won the 1953 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for his *Collected Poems, 1917-1952*. He is currently teaching at Harvard.

JOHN MONTAGUE has lived in Ireland since the age of four. He appeared in *Poems 1952* and is currently working on a novel and a book of poems.

MARVIN B. PERRY, JR., is a member of the English Department at Washington and Lee University and was co-editor of *Nine Short Novels*.

CLARENCE ALVA POWELL has appeared in many little magazines including *New Mexico Quarterly*, *Golden Goose*, *Imagi*, *Points*, and *Poetry Review*.

NORMAN M. REHG, JR., a graduate of Harvard, teaches English at Virginia Military Institute.

ROLAND RYDER-SMITH is a chef by vocation. His first volume of verse *Garlic and Narcissi*, will be ready for distribution shortly.

JOHN L. SWEENEY is Lecturer in General Education and Curator of the Poetry Room at Harvard.

PETER VIREECK won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1949. He is professor of history at Mount Holyoke College.

VERNON WATKINS lives in South Wales. Besides his *Selected Poems*, he has published two volumes of verse, *The Ballad of Mari Llwyd* and *The Lamp and the Veil*.

JEFFERSON YOUNG is the author of the widely acclaimed first novel, *A Good Man*.

ERRATUM

An error occurred in "Out From My Brain" by Lawrence Barth, in the Winter, 1953, issue. The first line of the next to last paragraph should correctly read: "Don't mind, for this happens to the bugs by the billion, somewhere."

THE DYLAN THOMAS FUND

The Dylan Thomas Fund is making an urgent appeal for contributions to meet the poet's medical bills and funeral expenses and, if possible, to tide his family over the difficult months ahead. Please send your check to The Dylan Thomas Fund, care of Philip Wittenberg, Treasurer, 70 West 40th Street, New York City. The solicitation is sponsored by W. H. Auden, E. E. Cummings, Arthur Miller, Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, Thornton Wilder, and Tennessee Williams.

Shenandoah takes this opportunity to express publicly its appreciation for the aid and guidance the following individuals and groups have given the magazine: Thomas H. Carter, James G. Leyburn, The Board of Trustees of Washington and Lee University, Harry K. Young and the Alumni Association of Washington and Lee University, our Faculty Advisory Board and the many parents, friends, and faculty members of Washington and Lee University who have assisted us in one way or another.

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